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NOVEMBER 2010

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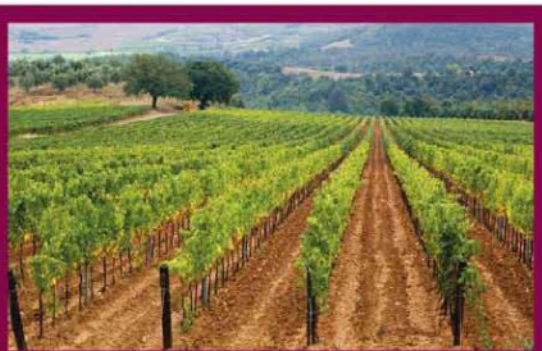


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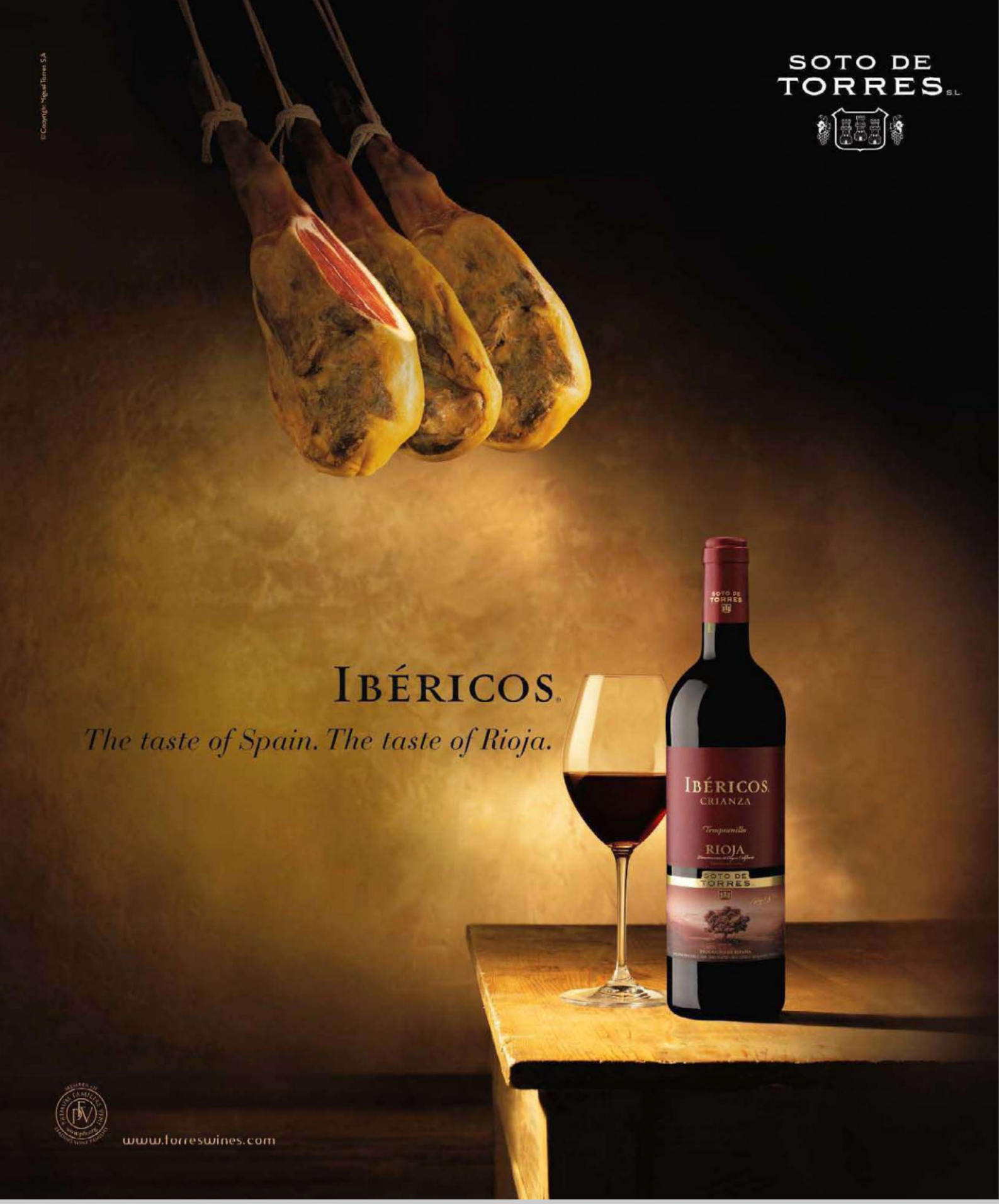


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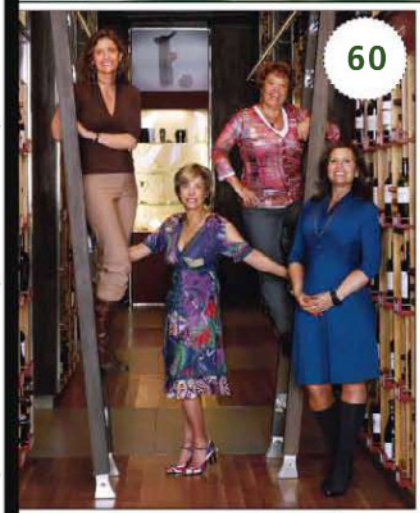
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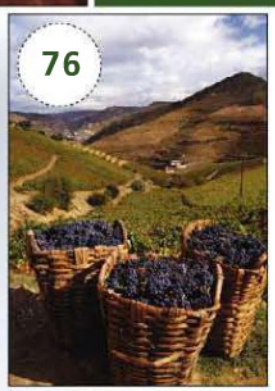
If you think the Douro is all about Port wines, think again. Winemakers here are crafting complex and delicious table wines at all price points.

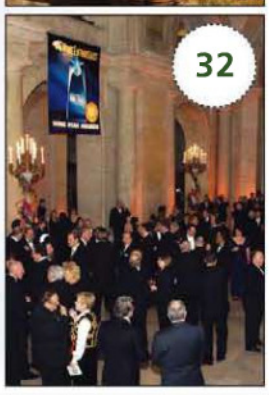
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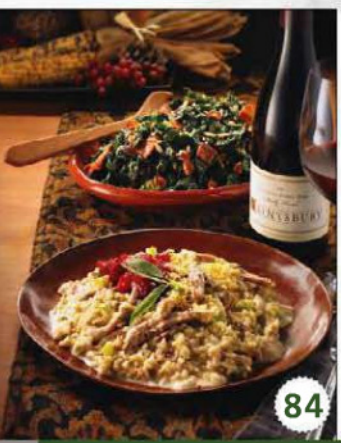




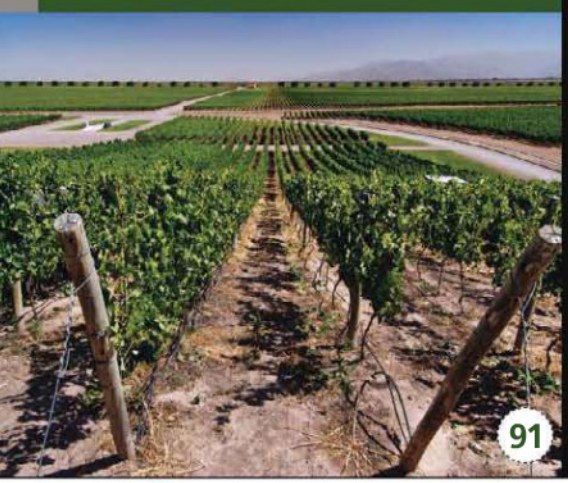












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Anthony Dias Blue
Editor In Chief, Tasting Panel Magazine
August 2010

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WINEMAG.COM
this month



WEB EXCLUSIVE **RECIPE**

Flavors of fall: Chilled Pear Soup

Chilled pear soup is a delicious and unpredictable way to end a fall meal. The peppercorns in this mouthwatering recipe add a sultry dimension to the pears, and the blue cheese garnish offers a lively complement. For more exclusive recipes, food and wine pairings and restaurant news, visit Recipes & Dining.
winemag.com/Wine-Enthusiast-Magazine/Recipes/

Hints for a Halloween Celebration

Don't get spooked about entertaining. From haunting party décor to food and wine pairings that work like witchcraft, your guests will revel in this festive feast. Plus, the perfect playlist!
winemag.com/halloweenparty

Fireside Cocktails

As the temperature drops, we ask master mixologists how to heat things up with the most savory cocktails of the season. Prepare to imbibe fall flavors like pumpkin vodka and apple brandy aplenty.
winemag.com/firesidecocktails

unreserved

Sparklers

Our Editors' Blog gives you great sparkling wines you've never heard of just in time for the holidays ahead. Cerdon de Bugey and Blanquette de Limoux are just two of the ten Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski selects, some of which come from beyond France's borders.
blog.winemag.com/editors/

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Vinitaly US Tour 2010

On October 25th, 'Vinitaly Day at Eataly' will be celebrated at New York's newest Italian artisan food superstore with consumer and trade tastings. On October 27th, the Vinitaly US Tour makes a stop in Philadelphia for the first time ever

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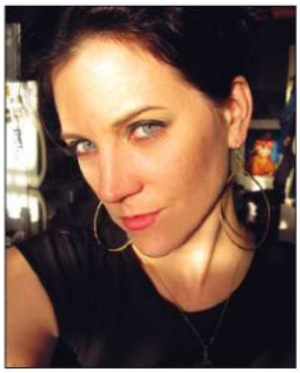
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Nicholas Vroman ("Basque Me No Questions") is a writer, photographer, musician, filmmaker and cultural explorer. He has spent many years traveling and working throughout Spain. Originally from Seattle, he now calls Tokyo his home. He writes on food, travel, film and whatever else catches his fancy, and is currently working on an adaptation of *Jules and Jim* set in Laramie and Omaha. With his wife, Virginia Sorrells, he blogs on all things food and culture at *ajimi.net.*



Lilly Kuwashima ("Holiday Cheers") writes about travel and spirits from her home in Los Angeles. She was born in New Zealand, where she recalls ordering her first drink. While waiting for a connecting flight, she caught the bartender's eye and, when asked, "What's your poison?" she said, "Milk." Being three years old, that was the right call. The event marked the beginning of a passion for travel and libations, which has taken her to wineries in South Africa, Austria and California, and on a recent tour of saké breweries in Japan.



Frank Melodia ("The Flavors of Autumn"), a former restaurant chef and editorial test kitchen director, is a food stylist and recipe developer. His styling and recipes have been featured regularly in *Redbook, Woman's Day, Fine Cooking, Weight Watchers, Bon Apetit, Vegetarian Times* and *Coastal Living.* When not styling or cooking, he is tending his garden in Great River, New York.

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CHILE, ARGENTINA AND NOW BRAZIL

Some of the finest expression of methode Champenoise outside of France can be found in the wine regions of Southern Brazil. Surprised?

Brazil. The name evokes all sorts of associations, from lush rainforest to beach to carnival to exotic cruises down the Amazon. Now add this word: wine. Brazil may be the next emerging South American country to make an impact on the U.S. and global markets, following in the footsteps of its more established neighbors, Argentina and Chile.

This exciting new viticulture region, centered around the city of Bento, boasts a host of vineyards that are celebrated in Brazil but barely known outside, though that will change as hotels at the level of the splendid Hotel Spa do Vinho Caudalie open to welcome visitors. Driving around Bento is akin to taking a jaunt in Tuscany. Rolling hills give way to spectacular vistas; the countryside is magical. And the vineyards contain some magic as well; winemakers here are producing some excellent Merlot, Cabernet Franc and exceptional sparkling wine.

The wines are not widely distributed yet in the U.S., but soon be on the lookout for chocolaty, rich, fruit-forward Merlots from Pizzato, licorice-flavored Cabernet Franc from Casa Valduga as well as blends of Tannat, Cab Franc and Malbec that can stand up to the best of their neighbors. The Miolo Wine Group has commissioned consultant Michel Rolland, who has harnessed its modern facility to produce exceptional still and sparkling wines, including Meritage Bordeaux blends that sell in the $30–$50 range, where wines of comparable quality in Argentina and Chile are in the $50–$100 range. Lídio Carraro offers Quorum, a blend of Merlot, Tannat and Cab Franc that delivers huge flavors of mint and black currant spice, and their Singular is a Nebbiolo-based beauty that provides wonderful Piedmont characteristics.

But the big story here is the sparkling wines. Moët et Chandon has its own facility here to produce a Chandon Brazilian sparkling wine from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay fruit in all its toasty, fruity glory. In the $10–$15 price range there is alot to choose from. Aurora's sparkling Chardonnay (along with its still Cab Franc, Carmenère and Cabernet Sauvignon) provide ample quality for its below-$10 price point. Casa Valduga produces a crisp Malbec rosé, both still and sparkling. But the finest producer of sparkling wine in the region, hands down, is Cave Geisse. Situated in the South of Bento, the vineyards are at a very high altitude where the rolling hills are reminiscent of Tuscany but much cooler. Brut, Natural and Rosé Cave Geisse would all score in the 90s on any critic's score card.

Brazil is evidence that South America is a continent undergoing substantial change, but there's more. Chile is traditionally thought of as male-dominated, but as Michael Schachner reports in his article on the women winemakers of Chile (page 60), over the past decade, women have taken center stage as influential winemakers.

Yet another tradition-bound country that is undergoing rapid change is Portugal—and in this issue, specifically the Douro. As sales of Port have flattened over the past decade—not due to any lack of quality, certainly, but mostly a shift in fashion and lifestyle—the winemakers of the Douro have refocused their considerable skills on crafting table wines. In the story that begins on page 76, European Editor Roger Voss unearths the gems for you to buy today.

The wine world is full of such surprises and unexpected pleasures in the glass. For example, wine lovers of a certain experience level who think they know Pinot Grigio might be surprised by the global report on Pinot Grigio/Pinot Gris that begins on page 67. There are some remarkable, stylish and distinctive wines being produced. It's a terrific guide to a wine that people clamor for.

And if it's well-priced, quality wine gems you're looking for, I'm sure the cover story already grabbed your attention. One of our most popular features every year is our selection of the Top 100 Best Buys (page 42)—wines that are high in quality in relation to price. You will find a wealth of wines earning 90-plus scores whose retail price is $15 and below. It's the definite article to take with you while stocking up on wines for your holiday entertaining.

In years to come, we expect the wines of Brazil to take their place among many others on such lists, including our Cellar Selections and Enthusiast 100 lists that will appear in upcoming issues. Our editor who covers South America, Michael Schachner, will be reporting on Brazil and reviewing its wines in future issues. We are happy to bring the surprises, the values and the quality to your attention.

Cheers!



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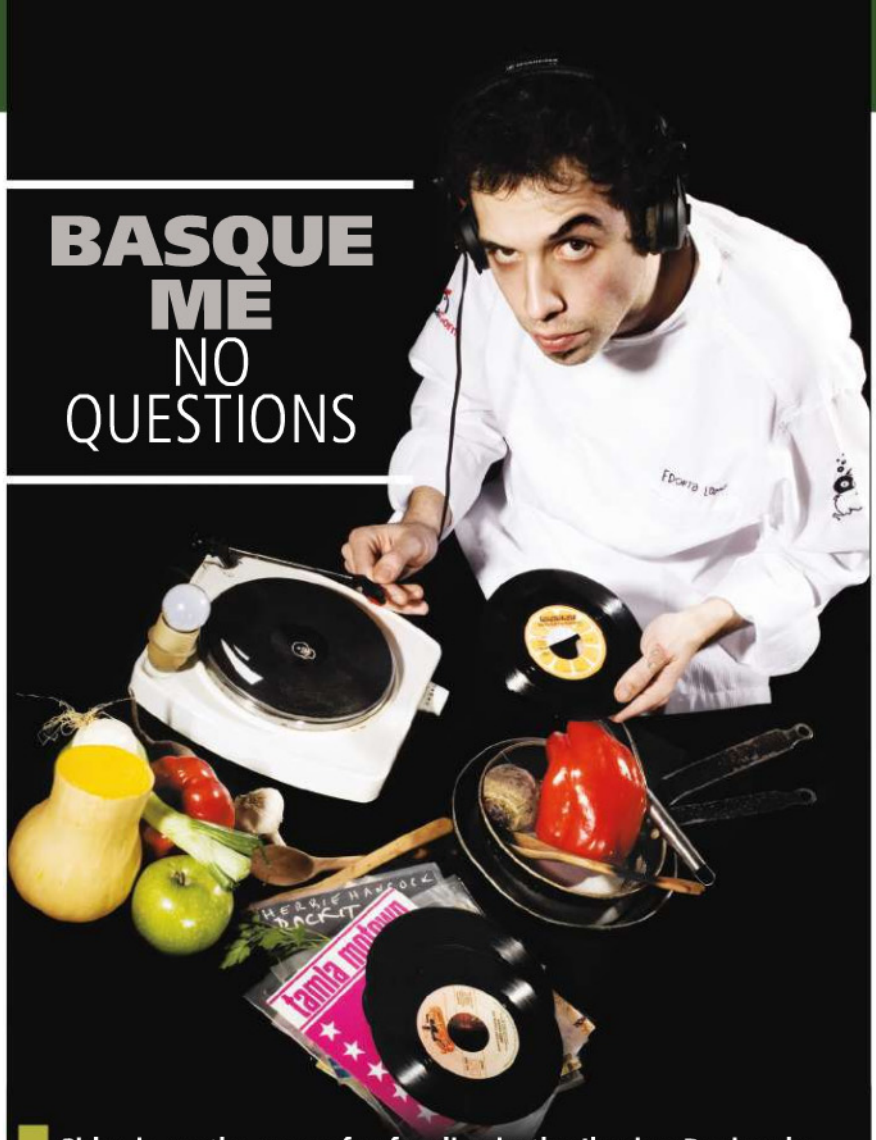


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BASQUE ME NO QUESTIONS



Cider is on the menu for foodies in the Iberian Peninsula. Visitors to Spain's Basque country are often impressed by the role cider plays in its thriving food culture. New young Basque chefs have some innovative ideas on the duo of food and cider. Edorto Lamo (pictured) of Donostia's groundbreaking eatery, a fuego negro *(afuegonegro.com)*, offers postmodern dishes with aggressive flavor combinations, like sugar and salt-cured horse mackerel with chopped mint and Oveja on a sweet cherry meringue or grilled dove splattered with beet and licorice, all paired with local brews. Here are more classic takes on cider and savory food pairings:

Smoke and Fire. Chorizos with smoky pimenton, cooked in cider are classic in Asturias. Huge beef slabs (chuletas) cooked over wood fires rule at Basque cider houses.

Flesh and Blood. Basque chuletas come one way—blood rare. The classic bean stew, Fabada Asturias, is laden with chorizo, pork and blood sausage. Both regions showcase the rich and savory.

Salt. The salty, pungent blue cheese, Queso Cabrales is a must in Asturias. In the Basque Country, a cider feast starts with a tortilla (omelette) filled with salt cod and closes with sharp Oveja (sheep cheese).

For more on Basque recipes and cider pairings, go to *winemag.com/Basque.*

—Nicolas Vroman

ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL DELAPORTE

LUXE Life

MARATHON TREATMENTS AT THE GUERLAIN SPA, NEW ORLEANS

'Tis the season…to be stressed. For those looking for an unusually opulent getaway either during or in the aftermath of the holidays, two epic treatments at the opulent Guerlain spa in New Orleans fit the bill. Both clock in at an astounding seven-plus hours of plush pampering. The 12,500-square-foot spa offers the Sublime Deluxe Package ($1250) or Cocooning Imperiale Package ($1075) for those in need of some serious relaxation. Located inside the historic, recently renovated—to the tune of $145 million—Roosevelt Hotel (a part of the Waldorf Astoria collection), the spa's luxurious sessions begin with soothing hydrotherapy in one of 10 private treatment rooms outfitted with showers and fully stocked vanities, where sequentially controlled jets soothe sore muscles. An invigorating body polish, facial and signature massage are to follow (incorporating Guerlain's esteemed line of beauty and fragrance products), along with an intensive hand and foot therapy session, complete with a mineral bath, paraffin wax and mask—terrific for post-holiday shopping. Guerlain's marathon spa treatments ensure you'll emerge rested and so thoroughly relaxed, you may need to check into the hotel for a nap. No wonder they call it the Big Easy. theroosevelt neworleans.com



—Alexis Korman

WILD AT HEART

Restaurants nationwide are embracing exotic meats on their menus.

Just how far will adventurous gourmets go for the next new discovery? Pretty far, it seems, as evidenced by last summer's reports of eateries offering forbidden fruits such as lion burgers and whale sushi. But responsible trailblazers can still try tantalizing, if unusual, alternatives to basic beef, chicken and fish—without harming nature's most majestic creatures. Chefs around the country are embracing the trend by offering creatively prepared, little-known meats and quality game on their menus sourced from small, sustainable farms. Here's where you can let your taste buds walk on the wild side:

Restaurant Serenade (*restaurantserenade.com*) in Chatham, N.J., offers an ostrich loin sourced from humanely raised birds at organic Fossil Farms in nearby Andover. "It's very important for me to support smaller farmers who treat their animals humanely and don't use hormones or antibiotics. That's better for the environment and also healthier for our customers," says Chef James Laird. He also prepares a Canadian bison duo, sourcing the meat from D'Artagnan, a gourmet small-farm meat purveyor.

Abe & Arthur's (*abeandarthursrestaurant.com/*) in Manhattan's Meatpacking District serves a grilled Axis venison chop with Brussels sprouts, butternut squash and wild lingonberries (pictured). The eatery's free-ranging Axis deer are humanely harvested from Broken Arrow Ranch in the Texas Hill Country.

Bostonians admire the nose-to-tail philosophy employed at **Craigie On Main** (*craigieonmain.com*), where James Beard award-winning Chef Tony Maws serves up a tasty goat rillete marinated with wine, spices, herbs, shallots, garlic and cured pork belly.

Perhaps most unusual of all: Wild boar ribs and crocodile corn chowder are on the fall menu at the **Sunburnt Calf** and sister Aussie restaurants, **Bondi Road** and the **Sunburnt Cow** (*thesunburntcow.com*) in New York City. Small local purveyors in Australia provide the meats.

—Alexis Korman



BOTTLE PHOTOS JON VAN GORDER

TOP Shelf

Here's a look at this month's top-scoring Cellar Selection, Editors' Choice and Best Buy. For full tasting notes on these and hundreds of other wines, turn to our Buying Guide, which begins on **page 91.**

Cellar Selection



97 Dominus 2007 (Napa Valley); $129. Easily the greatest Dominus in memory. Comes down on the drier, lower alcohol and less ripe side than many Cabs in its league, yet lacks for nothing in complexity and sheer deliciousness. Tantalizes with blackberry tart, cherry, carob bean and a Pinot Noir-esque cola-rhubarb richness that retreats behind rich tannins and an earthiness suggesting sweet blond tobacco and dried sage. —S.H.

Editors' Choice



96 Byron 2008 Nielson Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $34. Silky and velvety soft in the mouth, coating the palate with extraordinary raspberry and cherry flavors, enriched with sweet oak, and spiced with cloves, cinnamon and white pepper. There are even notes of cocoa and orange zest. Yet brisk acidity makes it all clean and vibrant. —S.H.

Best Buy



90 Lopez Noceti 2008 1919 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Great Malbec for the money, and one that gives off the impression that it's three or four times more expensive than it is. From 40-year-old vines, this is concentrated and complex, with graphite, plum, prune and blackberry aromas. The palate is heavy but correct, and the primary flavors of berry and plum segue into fig and chocolate with ease. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

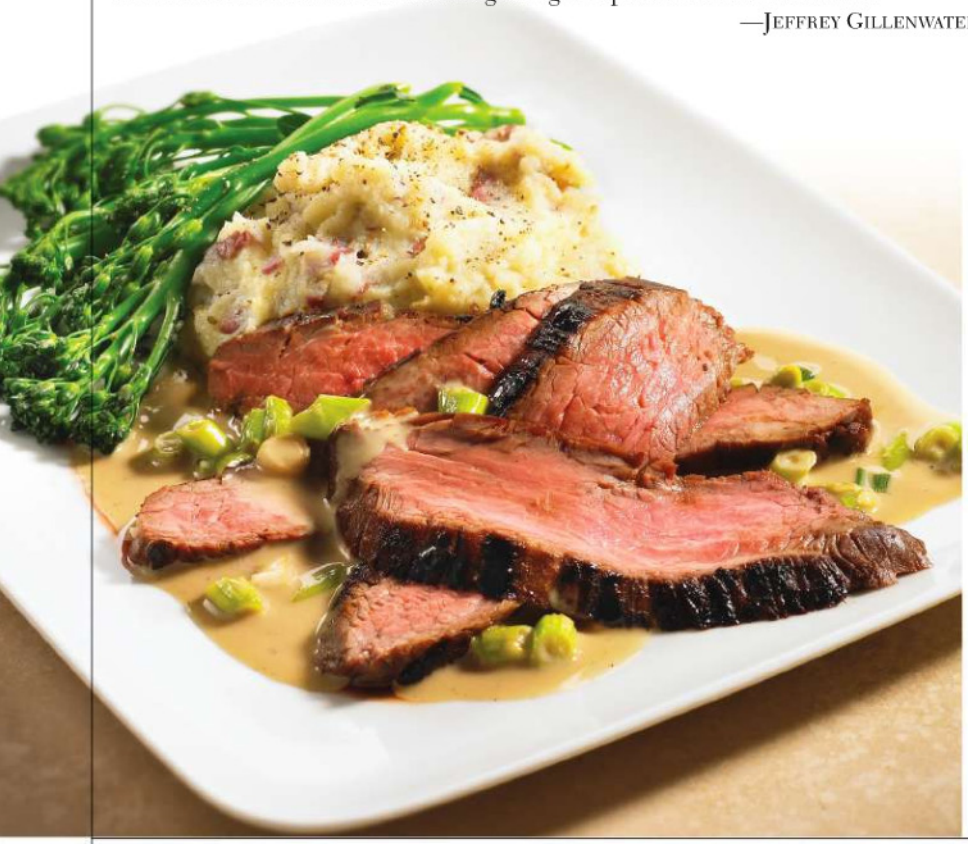
RECIPE of the Month

STEAK CHINOISE

WITH FRESH GINGER AND TAMARI CREAM

According to proprietor Dave Simpson of the C & O Restaurant in Charlottesville, Virginia, this lively dish was inspired by the flavor of a delicate oyster soup served by the restaurant in the 1980s. Paired with an earthy local red, it's the perfect interlude between a day at the Foxfield Races and a cool Southern evening sitting on a porch. *candorestaurant.com*

—Jeffrey Gillenwater

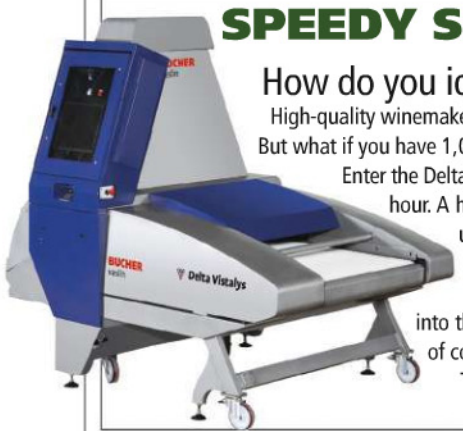


1 cup of canola oil
2 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
½ cup Tamari sauce, divided
2 crushed cloves of garlic
2 pounds beef flank steak
3 tablespoons butter (for frying the steak)
12 ounces heavy cream
¼ cup sliced scallions

Mix together canola oil, ginger, ¼ cup Tamari sauce and crushed garlic. Marinate the flank steak for at least 4 hours, overnight is recommended. Heat the butter in a black iron skillet if you have one or another heavy bottomed fry pan. Cook meat quickly to desired doneness. Set aside. With the pan on high add the heavy cream and ¼ cup Tamari, and let it reduce to the desired viscosity. Check seasoning. It may require a bit more Tamari. Add the scallions and take the pan off the heat. Add drippings that have seeped from the flank steak to the pan. Slice the flank steak thinly and at a slight angle, 45 degrees or less. Pour the sauce over the sliced steak and serve with simple sides like mashed potatoes and green beans. *Makes 4 servings.*

WINE RECOMMENDATIONS: *Highlight the savory, umami goodness of steak and Tamari cream with a rustic Virginia Bordeaux blend showing lots of earthy tobacco notes, fine-grained tannins and bramble fruit. Try the Tarara 2007 Meritage or the Linden Vineyards 2006 Boisseau.*

SPEEDY SORTER IMPROVES WINE QUALITY



How do you identify quality wine grapes before you crush them? One at a time.

High-quality winemakers solved this riddle a long time ago by employing sorters to pick out the bad grapes before they get to the press. But what if you have 1,000 tons of grapes to sort? That takes a lot of eyes.

Enter the Delta Vistalys, an automated sorter that separates the good grapes from the bad at astonishing speeds, up to 10 tons per hour. A high-speed camera looks at every grape on a dimpled conveyor belt. If it sees unripe or overripe grapes (or other unwanted material), a precise puff of air blows them off the belt into a waste bin.

How important is sorting? "Very!" says Michael Browne, co-owner and winemaker for Kosta Browne Winery in Sonoma County. "Sorting at the winery ensures we have taken every measure to get only the best grapes into the fermenters." Browne's sorters typically pick through about three tons per hour, which he says adds quite a bit of cost in labor.

The Delta Vistalys, produced by French manufacturer Bucher Vaslin, costs $175,000. buchervaslin.com

—Gil Kulers

MUSIC SOOTHES THE SAVAGE YEAST

South Africa's DeMorgenzon Winery turns to tunes for vine health.

A growing group of scientists-cum-winemakers, including those at DeMorgenzon winery in South Africa's Stellenbosch region, are studying the effects of music on the growth of vines and grapes. Mid-20th century botanists were among the first to measure music's effect on plant growth—studies at that time showed bigger crop yields and larger vegetables. In the late 1990's, Japanese researchers measured the effects of music on both liquid and frozen water molecules. Their findings showed that classical music produced more uniformly sized, symmetrical crystals than hard rock or heavy metal, which had a deleterious effect on crystal formation.

At DeMorgenzon, a 225-acre wine estate with 135 acres of carefully tended vines, classical music—specifically Baroque—is being used to affect vine growth. Under the influence of the music, results have shown a delay in the grapes' ripening by up to three weeks and a quickening in the fermentation process, leading, the winery claims, to more balance and structure in the Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Shiraz, Sauvignon Blanc bottlings, as well as their Shiraz/Mouvèdre/Viognier blend.

For years, the wine farm has experimented with the concept of music and its effect on vines; the current month-long loop includes the works of Mozart, Haydn and Bach. According to owners Hylton and Wendy Applebaum, "both repetition and variation" are characteristics of the music they've found to be most successful.

The musical stimulation extends beyond the vineyard, too. DeMorgenzon's DJ set is heard in the fermentation tanks and barrel cellar, as well. For non-plant species, an amphitheater for live public performances amidst their vines has just been built. **demorgenzon.com**

—Mike DeSimone and Jeff Jenssen

PHOTO COURTESY DEMORGENZON WINERY



Best Buys of the Month

Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo's Favorite Best Buys for November



While tasting for this month's issue, I couldn't help but think about the chaos that is the holiday season. With Thanksgiving just around the corner and the gift-giving holidays rapidly approaching, everyone's looking to get the most bang for their buck. Here are 10 Best Buys to consider including a few rosés for the Thanksgiving feast. Enjoy!

89 Laurent Miquel 2007 Nord Sud Syrah (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $14. A decadent Syrah with of black raspberry, black cherry, fudge brownie and coffee ice cream. Lush and creamy but not overdone. Imported by Frederick Wildman.

88 Douglas Green 2009 Vineyard Creations Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); $10. Vibrant, tart aromas of green gooseberries and lime rind elevate the underlying hay and fresh thyme herbality. Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.

88 Excelsior 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Robertson); $10. Black berries, leather and cigar box unfold on the nose, while black plum and mocha flood the finish. Imported by Cape Classics.

87 Cuvée de Peña 2009 Rosé (Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes); $11. A full and lush but still vibrant rosé with a gorgeous bouquet of fresh white strawberry, ripe plum and a touch of mango-infused tropical acidity. Imported by Hand Picked Selections.

87 Domaines Astruc 2009 dA Viognier (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $12. Aromas of white peach, pear, sweet pea and ginseng tea with honey. The palate is full and ripe with stone fruit flavors. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA).

87 Jean-Luc Colombo 2009 Cape Bleue Rosé (Vin de Pays de la Mediterranée); $12. Spicy hints of rosemary and ginger mingle with fruity aromas of nectarine, white cherry and wild strawberry. Imported by Palm Bay Imports.

86 Juno 2009 Cape Maidens Rosé (Western Cape); $10. Flavors of ripe small strawberries, watermelon and juicy blood orange citrus lead through to the zippy finish. Imported by Confluence Wine Importers.

86 Indaba 2009 Chenin Blanc (Western Cape); $10. Fresh and vibrant with loads of citrus, melon and tart white plum guts in the nose and mouth. Glimmers of peony, mango and honeysuckle shine through. Imported by Cape Classics.

86 Domaines Paul Mas 2008 Chat'O Souris Syrah (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $9. There's a nice violet floral backbone, adding character and personality. Juicy red fruit and berries abound with accents of bay leaf and vanilla. Imported by I&B Imports.

86 Thorntree 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape); $9. There a green edge to this wine that's otherwise dominated by black cherry, black currant leaf and fennel spice. Imported by IBESC Wine Distributor.

Q&A WITH NIGEL LYTHGOE

REALITY SHOW JUDGE AND WINERY OWNER

The international TV producer and winery owner takes a break from taping the hit show "So You Think You Can Dance" to talk about communing with nature, New World love and why Simon Cowell is overripe.

Professional dancer-turned-TV producer Nigel Lythgoe is well known to American viewers as a judge on the popular show "So You Think You Can Dance." Lythgoe and boyhood friend Ken Warwick—both producers of "American Idol"—recently realized one of their childhood dreams when they founded Villa San Juliette Winery in Paso Robles, California. Alongside Adam LaZarre, an award-winning winemaker who shares their passion, they produce Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Sirah, Syrah, Zinfandel, and Sauvignon Blanc.

Wine Enthusiast: Tell us a little about your background, and how that led you and Ken to get involved with a winery.

Nigel Lythgoe: We both grew up in a pretty poor area of England, near Liverpool, and grew up with "concrete gardens." So it was basically a dream to go from a concrete backyard to a vineyard. It's very special for me. You know, a vineyard is a romantic idea.

WE: What experiences in your life led to your love of wine?

NL: Just drinking it, but with very little knowledge. On purchasing the vineyard, we realized just how little knowledge we did have. We were both told in the process, "You know how to become a millionaire in the wine business? Start off as a billionaire." We always knew it was going to cost money—we didn't realize the vineyard was going to create black holes for money.

WE: What is the most exciting thing about Villa San Juliette?

NL: The farming aspect means just as much to me as having a bottle in my hand and being able to say, 'This is my wine.' The nature part of it is so calming, so beautiful. Being in touch, I guess, with nature—it's disarming, to a degree.

WE: Who is on your team at the winery?

NL: It's a small team for 168 acres, but Adam LaZarre is the mastermind. When we interviewed him, he brought all his wines. We loved them, and we loved him, we loved his bohemian nature. He heard about the varietals we were putting in, and he got excited and felt inspired by what we were doing, and then he became our inspiration.

WE: Which wines do you drink at home?

NL: I collect Harlan Estates "The Maiden." I have nearly all reds, and would you believe, I also own some Villa San Juliette Sauvignon Blanc? I'm also a lover of Wolf Blass Black Label, the Cabernet-Shiraz blend. I love it. You could say I am much more "New World" than I am "French."

WE: You were a producer of the UK version of "Survivor." Which wine would you not be able to survive without on a desert island?

NL: I would have to say Caymus Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon. It has many memories for me.

WE: If you had to describe current "American Idol" judges Randy Jackson, Simon Cowell, and Ellen Degeneres in "wine terms," what words would you use?

NL: Randy: 'Full-bodied and mellow.'

Simon: 'A little overripe, full of tannins, and slightly bitter to the taste.'

Ellen: 'Sweet flavor, and soft on the palate.'

WE: If you were to stay in tonight to watch TV and drink a bottle of wine, what show would you watch, and which wine would you drink?

NL: The show, of course, would be "American Idol" and the wine would be a blush—a French blush, a Tavel, from Provence.

WE: If your wines were to appear on a program called "So You Think You Can Make Wine," what would you hope the judges would say about them?

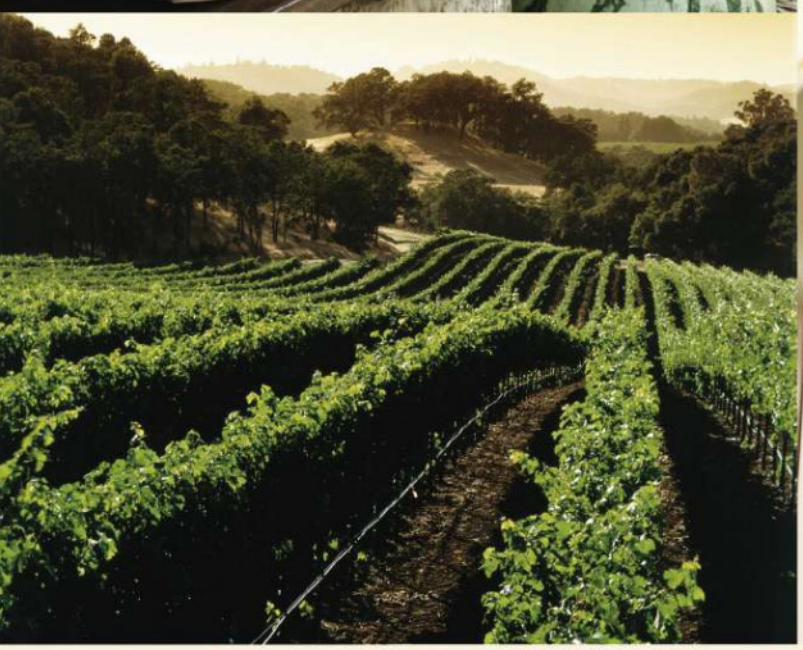
NL: (laughing) I would hope they would be too drunk to say anything bad.

—M.D AND J.J.



THE FARMING ASPECT MEANS JUST AS MUCH TO ME AS HAVING A BOTTLE IN MY HAND AND BEING ABLE TO SAY, 'THIS IS MY WINE.' THE NATURE PART OF IT IS SO CALMING, SO BEAUTIFUL.







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FARE | Play

BY DAVID ROSENGARTEN

HOW THE BRITISH CREATED "CURRY"...

...and at the same time total confusion about what Indian food really is.

The citizens of England display phenomenal facility with their language every day, but historically speaking, their ancestors didn't do so well with other languages.

Wine alone gives us multiple examples. Where does the word "Sherry" come from? English businessmen trying to pronounce Jerez. How about the designation "hock" for wines from the Rheingau? Apparently, "Hochheim" was too difficult for the English merchants to say...so all "Rhine wines" became "hock."

And when it came to India, where the British had, ahem, a presence...*oy vey*!

I can't think of another cuisine in the world whose fundamentals, outside of India, are so strongly based on a falsehood. And it was the English who brought that falsehood to us.

The cuisine—or more properly, the cuisines—of India, are mind-blowingly varied. Imagine what it was like in the 18th century for good English boys, raised on porridge and mash and pudding, to encounter the food of the subcontinent. Their minds must have been blown, their woefully unprepared palates bewildered.

In a quest for order and comprehension, they must have started poking their noses into various kitchens and asking questions. "Whassat', mate?" they'd ask, and words that sound like "curry" kept reaching their ears. I speculate that the pivotal misunderstanding occured in Tamil Nadu. To the highest caste there, a *kaari* is a vegetable dish cooked with spices; the lower castes, who pronounce the word with a stress on the second syllable, use it to mean meat. If the meat is in gravy, they'd call it *kaaree kolambu*.



Further confusion was sown by the widely used Indian cooking pot, the *kadi*, which sounds similar, and by the important culinary leaf called *kari* in various of India's languages. (To this day we call it "curry leaf," which has nothing to do with curry.)

After some years of investigation, the English came to the conclusion that all that spicy stuff bubbling in pots all over India was curry; the Indians had never used that term.

But another English misunderstanding proved even more harmful to the international perception of Indian food.

The good old boys in Madras (now called Chennai) were probably sitting around at the Raj club, drinking their gin and tonics, praising the Indian table fare and suchlike and wondering how they might be able to get this food once they returned home. Someone perceived that Indian chefs were always putting spices in their food, and someone must have said, "Royght! That's blinkin' curry powder!"

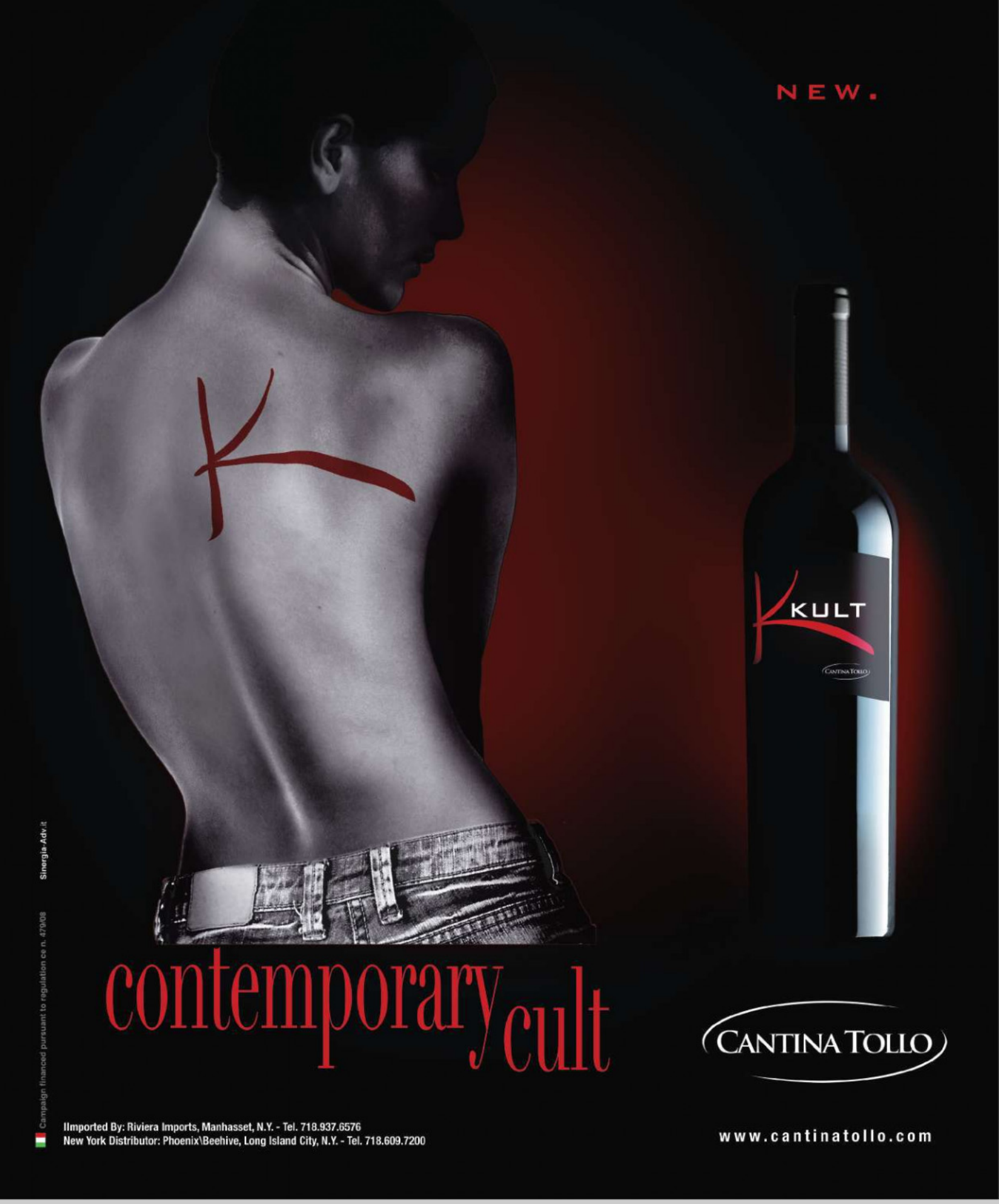
So, straightaway, some enterprising lefttenant with too much time on his hands starting packing up tins of "Madras Curry Powder" and sending them back to London. And to this day, millions of chefs worldwide think that Indian food is made by sprinkling curry powder into whatever's on the stove.

That approach to Indian food is about as authentic as sprinkling Parmesan over everything and calling it Italian.

The glory of Indian cuisine is its attention to the details of spicing. A good Indian chef has, among many other decisions, these to make:

- Which spices to use? There are dozens of common ones to choose from: cumin, cardamom, fenugreek, etc.
- Which ones whole, which ones coarsely ground, which ones fine?
- Which spices to roast, which to fry, which to add raw?
- When to add? Before the other ingredients? Early in the cooking? Mid-preparation? Late-preparation? As a final flavor boost? The possible permutations are endless, and that's why a good Indian dish from a good chef tastes only like itself and not like some generic commercial preparation called curry powder.

It is true that the English finally won, even in India, where chefs today will call things curry, because they can't keep fighting the whole world. But do notice next time you're in a good Indian restaurant how the menu may shy away from the designation "curry." You will have vindaloos, bhunas and kormas, yes, but only in go-with-the-flow places will you see the spiced main-course stews described as "curry."As great Indian chef and cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey once told the *New York Times*, "Curry powder is the villain!"


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Niagara

This laid-back Canadian wine haven offers a refined but relaxing getaway for gourmets on the go.







Top to bottom: Niagara's earth-friendly Stratus Winery was the first worldwide to earn LEED certification; 23 stainless steel chairs adorn the walls of Pillitteri Estates' barrel cellar (an auspicious number for founders Gary & Lena Pillitteri); and a horse-drawn plow is among the attractions to be found at scenic Tawse Winery.

Canada's Ontario Niagara wine region has changed dramatically in the past few years as wineries and winemakers have found their niche, intimately explored their terroir and discovered varieties and clones that perfectly suit the area's many microclimates. The resulting wines are spectacular, but there is more to the region than bottled bliss—picturesque villages, cozy eateries and wildlife abounds.

Close to more that 60 wineries, Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL) is an ideal town to use as a base for wine adventuring. From intimate hotels like **Oban Inn** (160 Front Street; *obaninn.ca*) to the expansive **Queen's Landing** (155 Byron Street; *vintage-hotels.com*) with its famed Tiara Restaurant (try the braised veal cheek with butter poached lobster), there are a plethora of unique lodging options here. When you're not tippling along the wine trail, NOTL's lively main street is lined with stylish cafés, boutiques and restaurants, and side-streets dotted with coffee table book-quality homes.

Creative pairings are a focus at Niagara's famous **Inniskillin Winery** (1499 Line 3; *inniskillin.com*), where Executive Chef David Penny couples sparkling vidal Icewine with haute bacon and eggs and Olympic Commemorative Edition Vidal with a decadent onion soup. The results are surprising and the winery, with its award-winning line of delicate but sumptuous dessert sips, is an iconic stop along the Ontario trail.

Lailey Vineyard's (15940 Niagara Parkway; *laileyvineyard.com*) focus is on coaxing the best from estate soil mixes for their Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Visit this boutique winery for an enlightening comparison of wines from different vineyards, then meander down the road for a tour, tasting and an unforgettable meal overlooking rows of grape vines at **Peller Estates** (290 John Street East; *peller.com*). Or sign up for a vineyard tour to picnic with the chef.

Stratus Winery (2059 Niagara Stone Road; *stratuswines.com*) makes limited quantities of premium assemblage and varietal wines that are the "best expression of the year and the land," according to winemaker J-L Groux. The winery is as stellar as the wines. As the first in the world to earn LEED certification, it is a spectacularly kind-to-the-earth and innovative building.

From humble fruit stand beginnings, **Pillitteri Estates Winery** (1696 Niagara Stone Road; *pillitteri.com*) grew to export wines to 27 countries. Brash Aussie export Marc Bradshaw makes elegant table and ice wines, and some unusual ones. Try the Bottled Blond (the wine, not the maker).

Royal De Maria Winery's (4551 Cherry Avenue; *royaldemaria.com*) focus is Icewine. Scores of international awards, many varieties including some unexpected ones, and outstanding quality draw crowds of visitors. Ask about the touching, touch-and-go story of the winery's beginning.

Awaiting organic certification, **Tawse Winery** (3955 Cherry Avenue; *tawsewinery.ca*) uses sheep and a traditional horse-drawn plow in the vineyards, and gravity and geo-thermal energy in their über-modern winery. Winemaker Paul Pender, a true "terroirist," is passionate about his Pinots (Noir).

With lake views, quaffable, well-made wines and a gorgeous Muskoka-style "lodge" as the main building, family owned and operated **Fielding Estate Winery** (4020 Locust Lane; *fieldingwines.com*) is as fresh and friendly as a smiling baby.

For a rich treat, visit **Upper Canada Cheese Company** (4159 Jordon Road; *upper canadacheese.com*) where all their handcrafted artisanal cheeses are made from milk from one herd of Guernsey cows. Sample Comfort Cream and Niagara Gold with a picnic in mind.

Finally, in-the-know locals frequent **About Thyme Bistro** (3457 King Street; *aboutthyme bistro.com*), **Stone Road Grille** (238 Mary Street; *stoneroadgrille.com*) and **DeLuca's Wine Country Restaurant** (111C Garrison Village Drive; *tonydeluca.ca*), but you can expect happy pairings of food and local wine coupled with a warm welcome wherever you go. Niagara folks are serious about wine, but relaxed about life. For more information, visit *tourismniagara.com*.

—Brenda McMillan



2008
88 POINTS
WINE ENTHUSIAST
July 2010

WHEN EVERY GRAPE IS ORGANIC,

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HOLIDAY CHEERS!

Tequila for Bourbon and Cognac Lovers

"There's a Tequila for everyone," says Cameron Bogue, Bar Manager of Bar Pleiades at The Surrey (thesurrey.com) hotel in New York City. For Bourbon and Cognac enthusiasts, Bogue recommends añejo or extra añejo Tequilas, which are aged for at least one year in French or American oak barrels, and often offer smoke, vanilla, wood and spice notes.

How best to enjoy añejo Tequilas? At Providence restaurant in Los Angeles, resident mixologist Zahra Bates serves it as a sipping Tequila; Bates raves about the "distinctively different" Riazul Añejo Tequila, which is aged for two years in French white oak barrels that formerly held Cognac or Brandy. Bogue favors sipping, but also suggests mixing añejos in classically inspired cocktails that call for aged spirits, such as an Añejo Old Fashioned or Añejo Manhattan; his añejo of choice is Casa Noble's French white oak single barrel Tequila. And for those who have a sweet tooth, pair a snifter with crème brûlée, pecan pie or–for a grand finale on Thanksgiving–pumpkin pie.

—Lilly Kuwashima

A SCOOP OF SCOTCH, SIR?

The trend started with boozy JELL-O shots, and migrated to liquor-infused cupcakes. Now, alcohol has become the flavor-du-jour for ice cream, too.

The forerunner is San Francisco's Humphrey Slocombe (humphreyslocombe.com), where the most popular ice cream flavor is Secret Breakfast, a concoction of ice cream with Bourbon and toasted cornflakes, incorporating so much Jim Beam that the scoops always run soft. Beer-based ice creams also are favorites, with flavors such as Collaborative Evil Ale, Eight Ball Stout, Guinness Gingerbread, and Russian Imperial Stout. Sorbet flavors include Jesus Juice (red wine and Coke); and a Limoncello-spiked Italian Ice.

In Scottsdale, Ariz., Lee's Cream Liqueur Ice Cream Parlor (leescreamliqueur.com), features house-made premium ice cream with about 5% alcohol (yes, ID required). Flavors include Appletini, Long Island Iced Tea, Piña Colada and Champagne.

Meanwhile, in Portland, Ore., Fifty Licks (954-294-8868) sells Single Malt Scotch ice cream from a mobile ice cream cart, as well as Slabtown Whiskey, made with small-batch hooch from local House Spirits Distillery. (When the boozy stuff isn't available, try their carbonated Red Bull Cola ice cream, or Maple with Bacon.)

New Yorkers also have locally inspired flavors from ice cream delivery service MilkMade (milkmadeicecream.com), such as Frozen Hot-Toddy, made with Bourbon from Tuthilltown, an upstate New York distillery, and Twist & Stout, made with Sixpoint Brewery's Otis Oatmeal Stout.

And it's not just ice cream shops, either: at Coi (coirestaurant.com), an upscale restaurant in San Francisco's financial district, a Frozen Mandarin Sour on the dessert menu relies on a mandarin-vodka gel for punch. Now that's something worth screaming about.

—Kara Newman





TREE OF LIFE

The spirit of Africa's marula fruit goes far beyond the glass.

The marula tree has figured strongly in African lore for centuries—as aphrodisiac, as medicine, as good luck charm for hopeful parents. A tall, umbrella-shaped tree which reaches heights of over 50 feet, the marula bears a small fruit, the size of a plum, which is packed with Vitamin C and delicious lychee-like flavor. It has been eaten by African tribespeople for thousands of years, and has also been brewed into beer. Migrating elephants are drawn to the fermenting fruit too, though tales of drunken animal rampages are more fiction than fact. Most people outside of Africa know the fruit as the key ingredient to Amarula Cream, straight up, on the rocks, or mixed into a cocktail.

Enter the The Amarula Trust, a South African charity organization supporting the indigenous people in South Africa and Kenya who make a living harvesting marula. The trust's main initiative is to protect the ecological balance of the trees' native lands by regulating harvest; workers via the trust enjoy the benefit of sponsored daycare centers for their children and educational scholarship opportunities, including training to become a game park ranger. Elephant conservation programs are also at the top of the list. Amarula Cream Liqueur is the largest single purchaser of marula fruit, and the trust's mission, "Sustaining Communities and Conscious Conservation," is supported by every bottle purchased. To learn more about the trust, go to amarulatrust.com. To order Amarula Cream and for Amarula cocktail recipes, go to amarula.com.

—Mike DeSimone and Jeff Jenssen

PHOTO CENTER CRISPIN CIDER

Limited Production



Real Rye

MICHTER'S AMERICAN WHISKEY CO. ★ BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY



COCKTAIL of the Month

ST-GERMAIN COCKTAIL

This simple-to-make sipper is St-Germain's signature cocktail recipe.

- 1½ parts St-Germain
- 2 parts Champagne or dry white wine
- 2 parts club soda or sparkling water

Stir ingredients in a tall, ice-filled Collins glass, mixing completely. Garnish with a lemon twist. If necessary, substitute sparkling wine, Prosecco or Cava for Champagne. For the dry white wine, Sauvingon Blanc works best.



COCKTAIL PHOTO JON VAN GORDER; TOP ANGELA WIELAND

MIXOLOGIST OF THE MONTH — Philip Pepperdine

Brand Ambassador, St-Germain

Philip Pepperdine is Corporate and Trade Education Manager for Cooper Spirits International, which makes him chief mixologist for one of the hottest spirits in America, the elderberry-based liqueur, St-Germain (stgermain.fr).

So how did the brand ambassador for one of the industry's top spirits get his start? Pepperdine began bartending in college "to get through monetarily, meet people, learn and have fun. Turned out I was very good at it," he says.

Pepperdine moved to New York in 1997 and helped open Olive's in the W Hotel. In the intervening years, he's done beverage consulting (including at Aer in Manhattan's trendy Meatpacking District) and created cocktail programs, notably at Barbounia in New York. At Barbounia, "I could do my work and live a rambunctious lifestyle. I met my wife, Sophia, there. Then I met Rob Cooper [owner of Cooper Spirits]. We clicked right away," Pepperdine notes.

In his work with St-Germain, Pepperdine is in charge of creating innovative cocktails, which can be a hit-or-miss process. "How do I come up with a recipe? First, [I] consider the environment it will go into. What's the concept? You want to make it easy for the bartender to understand, so you don't put too much in it, and you never want things to battle each other in a cocktail. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."

And while being a brand ambassador means embracing life on the go, cocktailians can still catch Pepperdine working his magic behind the bar, since the mixologist guest bartends at places like the Randolph at Broome, Daddy-O and Summit Bar (all in New York).

—Steve Heimoff



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PROUDLY PRESENTS

The World's Greatest Wine List

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Whites

Sparkling/Champagne

Bollinger Special Cuvée - Champagne, France
Bollinger Grand Année - Champagne, France
Bollinger R.D. - Champagne, France
Langlois-Chateau Crémant de Loire Brut NV - Loire Valley
Langlois-Chateau Crémant de Loire Brut Rosé NV - Loire Valley
Santa Margherita Prosecco di Valdobbiadene DOC, Italy
New Torresella - Prosecco - Veneto, Italy

Chardonnay

New Anthonij Rupert "Serruria" - Franschhoek Valley, South Africa
Cuvaison Estate - Carneros - Napa Valley
Glass Mountain - California
New Greystone Cellars - California
Hanna - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
New Hideaway Creek - Carneros - Sonoma
New Lucky Country - Barossa, Australia
New Luke Donald Collection - Carneros - Sonoma
Markham - Napa Valley
Olvena - Somontano, Spain
New Quickfire - Napa Valley
Rochioli - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Rutherford Hill - Napa Valley
Sanford - Sta. Rita Hills - Santa Barbara
Sanford - "La Rinconada" - Sta. Rita Hills - Santa Barbara
Tangley Oaks - Central Coast
Terlato Family Vineyards - Russian River Valley - Sonoma

Pinot Grigio / Gris

Josmeyer "Mise du Printemps" - Alsace, France
Josmeyer "Le Fromenteau" - Alsace, France
Kettmeir - Trentino - Alto Adige, Italy
New Quickfire - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Santa Margherita - Alto Adige, Italy
Sokol Blosser - Dundee Hills, Oregon
Terlato Family Vineyards - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Torresella - Veneto, Italy

Sauvignon Blanc

Chimney Rock Fumé Blanc - Napa Valley
Hanna - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Langlois-Chateau Château de Fontaine - Loire Valley, France
Langlois-Chateau "Les Pierrefeux" Pouilly-Fumé - Loire Valley, France
Markham - Napa Valley
New Quickfire - Napa Valley
Rochioli - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Tangley Oaks - Napa Valley
Wairau River - Marlborough, New Zealand

Riesling

Josmeyer "Le Dragon" - Alsace, France
Two Hands "The Wolf" - Clare Valley, Australia
Wairau River - Marlborough, New Zealand

Rosé

Chapoutier "Belleruche" Rosé - Côtes-du-Rhône
Langlois-Chateau "La Bretonnière" Cabernet de Saumur Rosé Sec
Rutherford Hill Rosé of Merlot - Napa Valley

Alternative Whites and Blends

New Anthonij Rupert "Nemesia" - Franschhoek Valley, South Africa
Boutari Moschofilero - Greece
Chimney Rock "Elevage Blanc" - Stags Leap District - Napa Valley
New Elios - Mediterranean White
New Sanford "Fleur de Domaine" - Roussanne and Viognier - Santa Barbara
Seven Daughters Winemaker's Blend - California
Sokol Blosser "Evolution" - Dundee Hills, Oregon
Tamari - Torrontés - Argentina
Two Hands Moscato "Brilliant Disguise" - Barossa, Australia

Italy

Baglio di Pianetto "Ficiligno" - Insolia and Viognier - Sicily
Baglio di Pianetto "Piana del Ginolfo" - Viognier - Sicily
Gaja "Alteni Di Brassica" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Gaia & Rey" Blanc - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Rossj-Bass" - Langhe, Piemonte
Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio - Alto Adige
New Torresella - Riesling - Pavia, Italy

France

Rhône

Chapoutier "Belleruche" Blanc - Côtes-du-Rhône
Chapoutier "Chante-Alouette" - Hermitage
Chapoutier "La Bernardine" Blanc - Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Chapoutier "Les Meysonniers" Blanc - Crozes-Hermitage

Burgundy

Chanson Chablis AOC - Chablis
Chanson Beaune Clos des Mouches Premier Cru - Burgundy
Chanson Viré-Clessé - Mâconnais - Burgundy
Chanson Chassagne-Montrachet - Côte de Beaune - Burgundy
Chanson Meursault - Côte de Beaune - Burgundy
Chanson Pernand-Vergelesses 'Les Caradeux' Premier Cru - Burgundy
Chanson Puligny-Montrachet - Côte de Beaune - Burgundy
Chanson Corton-Vergennes Grand Cru - Burgundy
Mischief and Mayhem - White Burgundy Chardonnay - Burgundy
Mischief and Mayhem - Meursault Chardonnay - Burgundy

Greece

Boutari Moschofilero
Boutari Kallisti Reserve - Santorini
Boutari Kretikos White - Crete
Boutari Santorini - Santorini

Dessert Wines

Chapoutier Banyuls
Chapoutier Hermitage Vin de Paille
Peller Estates Cabernet Franc Icewine - Niagara Peninsula, Canada
Peller Estates Riesling Icewine - Niagara Peninsula, Canada
Peller Estates Oak Aged Vidal Blanc Icewine - Niagara Peninsula, Canada
Two Hands Semillon "For Love or Money" - Barossa, Australia

Sake

New Shimizu-No-Mai "Pure Dawn" - Akita, Japan
New Shimizu-No-Mai "Pure Dusk" - Akita, Japan
New Shimizu-No-Mai "Pure Night" - Akita, Japan

Premium Spirits

Gaja "Gaia & Rey" Grappa - Langhe, Piemonte
Il Poggione Grappa di Brunello - Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany
Nonino Grappa Crú Monovitigno Picolit - Percoto, Friuli
Nonino Vigneti Grappa Chardonnay - Percoto, Friuli
Nonino Vigneti Grappa Merlot - Percoto, Friuli
Nonino Quintessentia Amaro - Percoto, Friuli
Tiramisú Liqueur - Italy

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Reds

Cabernet Sauvignon

New **Anthonij Rupert** - Franschhoek Valley, South Africa
Brandlin - Mount Veeder - Napa Valley
Chimney Rock - Stags Leap District - Napa Valley
Chimney Rock "Tomahawk" - Stags Leap District - Napa Valley
Cuvaison Estate - Mount Veeder - Napa Valley
Glass Mountain - California
New **Greystone Cellars** - California
Guardian Peak Lapa - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Hanna - Alexander Valley - Sonoma
Hanna "Bismark Mountain Vineyard" - Sonoma
New **Hideaway Creek** - Sonoma
New **Jack Nicklaus** - Napa Valley
Markham - Napa Valley
New **Markham** - "Altruist" - Calistoga Estate Vineyard - Napa Valley
New **Markham** - "Philanthropist" - Yountville Estate Vineyard - Napa Valley
New **Quickfire** - Napa Valley
Rust en Vrede - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Rutherford Hill - Napa Valley
Tangley Oaks - Napa Valley
Terlato Family Vineyards - Rutherford - Napa Valley
Terlato Family Vineyards - Stags Leap District - Napa Valley
Two Hands "Aphrodite" - Barossa, Australia
New **Two Hands** "Coach House Block" Cabernet Sauvignon - Barossa, Australia
New **Two Hands** "Charlie's Patch" - Napa Valley

Merlot

Cuvaison Estate - Carneros - Napa Valley
Glass Mountain - California
New **Greystone Cellars** - California
Guardian Peak - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Hanna - Alexander Valley - Sonoma
Markham - Napa Valley
Markham "Reserve" - Napa Valley
Rust en Vrede - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Rutherford Hill - Napa Valley
Rutherford Hill "Reserve" - Napa Valley
Santa Margherita Merlot Versato - Lison- Pramaggiore
Tangley Oaks - Napa Valley

Pinot Noir

Cuvaison Estate - Carneros - Napa Valley
Cuvaison Estate - "Block F5" - Carneros - Napa Valley
New **Quickfire** - Central Coast, California
Rochioli - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Sanford "La Rinconada Vineyard" - Sta. Rita Hills - Santa Barbara
Sanford "Sanford & Benedict Vineyard" - Santa Barbara
Sanford - Sta. Rita Hills - Santa Barbara
Sokol Blosser - Dundee Hills, Oregon
New **Terlato Family Vineyards** - Russian River Valley - Sonoma
Wairau River - Marlborough, New Zealand

Syrah / Shiraz

Guardian Peak - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Hanna "Bismark Mountain Vineyard" - Sonoma
New **Lucky Country** - McLaren Vale, Australia
Rust en Vrede - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Terlato & Chapoutier Shiraz - Viognier - Victoria, Australia
Terlato & Chapoutier Shiraz lieu dit Malakoff Shiraz - Pyrenees, Australia
Terlato Family Vineyards Syrah - Dry Creek Valley - Sonoma
Two Hands "Ares" - Barossa, Australia
Two Hands "Bella's Garden" - Barossa, Australia
Two Hands "Lily's Garden" - McLaren Vale, Australia
Two Hands "Samantha's Garden" - Clare Valley, Australia
Two Hands "Sophie's Garden" - Padthaway, Australia
Two Hands "Harry & Edward's Garden" -Langhorne Creek, Australia
Two Hands "Max's Garden" - Heathcote, Victoria, Australia
Two Hands "Gnarly Dudes" - Barossa, Australia
Two Hands "Angels Share" - McLaren Vale, Australia
New **Two Hands** "Coach House Block" - Barossa, Australia
New **Two Hands** "Zippy's Block" - Barossa, Australia

Zinfandel

Alderbrook - Dry Creek Valley - Sonoma
New **Giarrusso** - Dry Creek Valley - Sonoma
Hanna "Bismark Mountain Vineyard" - Sonoma
New **Quickfire** - Dry Creek Valley - Sonoma
New **The Federalist** - Dry Creek Valley - Sonoma

Bordeaux Blends

Chimney Rock "Elevage" - Stags Leap District - Napa Valley
Ernie Els - Stellenbosch, South Africa
EPISODE - Napa Valley
New **Jack Nicklaus** - "Private Reserve" - Napa Valley
Luke Donald Collection Claret - Napa Valley
Terlato Family Vineyards "Angels' Peak" - (Pomerol Blend) Napa Valley
Terlato Family Vineyards "Devils' Peak" - (St. Émilion Blend) Napa Valley
Terlato Family Vineyards "Cardinals' Peak" - (Margaux Blend) Napa Valley

Alternative Reds and Blends

New **Anthonij Rupert** Cabernet Franc - Franschhoek Valley, South Africa
New **Elios** - Mediterranean Red
Engelbrecht Els - Stellenbosch, South Africa
New **GALAXY** - Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah - Napa Valley
Guardian Peak Frontier - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Langlois-Chateau "Les Montifault Chinon" - Loire Valley, France
Rust en Vrede Estate Blend - Stellenbosch, South Africa
Seven Daughters Winemaker's Blend - California
Sokol Blosser "Meditrina" - Dundee Hills, Oregon
Tamari - Malbec - Argentina
Two Hands "Aerope" - Grenache - Barossa, Australia
Two Hands "Yesterday's Hero" - Grenache - Barossa, Australia
Two Hands "Brave Faces" - Shiraz/Grenache - Barossa, Australia

Italy

Baglio di Pianetto "Ramione" - Merlot and Nero d'Avola - Sicily
Baglio di Pianetto "Piana dei Cembali" - Nero d'Avola - Sicily
Ca' Marcanda "Promis" - Gaja, Super Tuscan
Ca' Marcanda "Magari" - Gaja, Super Tuscan
Ca' Marcanda "Camarcanda" - Gaja, Super Tuscan
Gaja Barbaresco - Barbaresco, Piemonte
Gaja "Costa Russi" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Sorì Tildìn" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Sorì San Lorenzo" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Sperss" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Conteisa" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Sito Moresco" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja "Darmagi" - Langhe, Piemonte
Gaja Pieve Di Santa Restituta "Rennina" Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany
Gaja Pieve Di Santa Restituta "Sugarille" Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany
Il Poggione Brunello di Montalcino - Tuscany
Il Poggione Brunello di Montalcino Riserva - Tuscany
Il Poggione Rosso di Montalcino - Tuscany
Mazzoni Toscana Rosso - Montalcino
Santa Margherita Chianti Classico - Chianti
New **Torresella** Nero d'Avola - Sicily
New **Torresella** Pinot Noir - Sicily

France

Rhône

Chapoutier Hermitage "La Sizeranne" Rouge - Hermitage
Chapoutier Ermitage "Le Pavillon" - Hermitage
Chapoutier Ermitage "Le Méal" Rouge - Hermitage
Chapoutier Ermitage "L'Ermite" Rouge - Hermitage
Chapoutier "La Bernardine" Rouge - Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Chapoutier "Croix de Bois" - Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Chapoutier "Barbe Rac" - Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Chapoutier "Les Meysonniers" Rouge - Crozes-Hermitage
Chapoutier "Petite Ruche" - Crozes-Hermitage
Chapoutier "Belleruche" Rouge - Côtes-du-Rhône

Burgundy

Chanson Clos de Vougeot Grand Cru - Burgundy
Chanson Pernand Vergelesses 'Les Vergelesses' Premier Cru - Burgundy
Chanson Bourgogne Pinot Noir - Burgundy
Chanson Gevrey-Chambertin - Côte de Nuits - Burgundy
Chanson Beaune "Clos des Mouches" Premier Cru - Burgundy
Chanson Beaune "Clos des Fèves" Premier Cru - Burgundy
Mischief and Mayhem - Red Burgundy Pinot Noir - Burgundy
Mischief and Mayhem - Volnay Pinot Noir - Burgundy
Mischief and Mayhem - Vosne-Romanee Pinot Noir - Burgundy

Greece

Boutari - Merlot - Xinomavro
Boutari Grande Reserve Naoussa - Naoussa
Boutari "Nemea" - Agiorgitiko - Agiorgitiko
Boutari "Ode" - Cabernet Sauvignon - Agiorgitiko
Boutari "Skalani" - Crete

Spain

Olvena "Crianza" - Cabernet Sauvignon - Somontano
Olvena "Hache" - Syrah and Garnacha - Somontano
Olvena Red Blend - Tempranillo, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon - Somontano
Olvena "Cuatro" - Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah - Somontano

Wine Enthusiast's Annual Wine Star Awards

Presenting the nominees for the 2010 honors.



The editors of *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* are proud to announce the individuals and companies in wine and distilled spirits that we feel reached a noteworthy level of achievement and overall excellence in 2010. The winners in each category will be announced in our December 15th issue, and a gala dinner will be held in New York City in January, 2011; at that time, the winners will be presented with their wine stars.

And the nominees are…

PERSON OF THE YEAR

Andrew Browne

Browne is the charismatic founder and CEO of Precept Wine Brands. In just seven years, Precept has grown to be the second largest wine company in Washington State, and the largest that is privately owned and locally held. Core brands include Waterbrook, Willow Crest, Alder Ridge, Apex and the Magnificent Wine Company, producer of the popular "House" wines. Precept owns several hundred vineyard acres in Washington, along with properties in Oregon, Idaho and Australia.

Nicolás Catena

An economist by training, Catena became familiar with the Napa model of ripe but balanced red wines during the 1980s while teaching at UC Berkeley. Since the early '90s, Catena has led his native Argentina toward its current position: fastest growing exporter of the 21st century. During the same time period, his family's winery has become an undisputed leader among Argentine producers.

Bill Foley

Real estate and finance entrepreneur Foley made his fortune building the nation's largest title insurance company, then took his money and developed several wineries in Santa Barbara County. Over the last few years, he's been on a winery buying spree; his latest acquisition was Chalk Hill, announced on June 10, 2010. Foley recently signed up Young's Market for its California distribution.

Jerry Lohr

Considered a modern-day California pioneer, Lohr helped develop Paso Robles as a red wine source, and also has boosted Monterey's Arroyo Seco appellation for white wines. His J. Lohr brand has become the nation's 16th-largest wine company, with consistently good values across its million-case production. Lohr also is active in industry organizations, such as the Wine Institute and U.C. Davis's Department of Viticulture and Enology.

Man of the Year (2009) Ted Baseler with Adam Strum



Christian Moueix

Through ownership and management of such prestigious estates as Trotanoy and Hosanna, and family involvement in Pétrus, Christian Moueix has redefined Merlot in Pomerol. President of Etablissements J.P. Moueix and a major négociant on the Right Bank of Bordeaux, he is about to hand over running the company to his son Edouard. In Napa, he created Dominus. Now he is restoring the glory of Château Belair (renamed Belair-Monange) in Saint-Émilion.

AMERICAN WINERY

Barefoot

Originally a tasting room offering at Sonoma's Davis Bynum winery and then a success as a brand, Barefoot was purchased by E&J Gallo in 2005. Since then, it has become one of Gallo's most dynamic labels, helping to keep Gallo in first place as America's biggest wine company. Barefoot also is active in social causes. Its most recent campaign is a worldwide effort to clean beaches of trash.

Hermann J. Wiemer

Inspired by a landscape reminiscent of his native Mosel, Hermann J. Wiemer pioneered American viticulture and vinification and helped position the Finger Lakes as one of the most successful regions to produce Riesling in the United States. Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard's Rieslings are consistently among the finest in the United States and receive accolades both nationally and internationally.

J. Lohr

J. Lohr is making some of the most interesting wines in California, at a wide variety of price points, and is at the forefront of the quality revolutions in Monterey County (for white wines) and Paso Robles (for reds). Now America's 16th largest winery, with case sales of one million annually, the company continues to expand, including through a range of second labels.

Pacific Rim

Founded by Bonny Doon's Randall Grahm, Pacific Rim specializes in Washington State Riesling. The first vintage was 2006, and production has climbed to 140,000 cases a year—as many as 11 different Rieslings. Among the Pacific Rim Rieslings are single-vineyard wines, a biodynamic wine, an organic wine and a plethora of styles from dry to off-dry to sweet and late harvest. There is also a sparkling Riesling, and an almost fanatic commitment to eco-friendly winemaking.

Shafer

Napa Valley boasts many fine wineries, but even the most prestigious among them recognize Shafer Vineyards for the



The Wine Star Awards gala at the New York Public Library in January.

role it has played since founder John Shafer crushed his first Cabernet in the miracle vintage of 1978. The winemaking team is now led by his son, Doug, and Elias Fernandez. Shafer's overall wine quality is among the best in California, and the winery has been tireless in promoting the Stags Leap District as one of Napa's most honored interior appellations.

EUROPEAN WINERY

Gérard Bertrand

Both landowner and partner of the best winegrowers in the South of France, Gérard Bertrand has found success through offering great wines at fair prices. With over 325 hectares of vineyards across the best Languedoc terroirs, he has understood better than most the evolution in consumer behavior towards expressive, well-balanced and elegant wines that remain accessible and affordable.

Château Latour

For many wine lovers, Latour is quintessential Bordeaux. The château is at the summit of the Bordeaux hierarchy, producing year in and year out the most beautiful, powerful wines. Under owner François Pinault and director Frédéric Engerer, the cellar has been completely refashioned into a super-sensitive instrument to interpret the supreme quality of grapes from the vineyard. The results are there in the already legendary 2005 and 2009.

Mastroberardino

The family credited with saving many of southern Italy's most precious indigenous varieties (Fiano, Greco di Tufo, Falanghina and Aglianico) from sure extinction, Mastroberardino is a bright beacon for Campania winemaking. Founded in the 1750s, the company was among the first to export wines to America. It remains dedicated to protecting Italy's diverse genetic patrimony and ancient winemaking heritage.

Sogrape

Sogrape is the largest producer in Portugal. With quality always top of mind, it is able to make everything from Mateus Rosé to the legendary Barca Velha (latest vintage 1999). Brands in the Sogrape portfolio include Sandeman, Ferreira, Finca Flichman in Argentina and many others. The Guedes family, owner since Sogrape's founding in 1942, is always pushing the firm to the leading edge of innovation.

Viña Sastre

There are good wineries and great wineries: family-owned Viña Sastre, from the village of La Horra in the heart of Wine Region of the Year nominee Ribera del Duero (Spain), resides in the latter category. A strict adherer to healthy ripeness of fruit and natural winemaking techniques, owner/winemaker Jesús Sastre makes blockbuster wines including Pesus (100 points for the '06), Regina Vides (98 points for the '05) and Crianza (91 points for the '07).

NEW WORLD WINERY

Achaval-Ferrer

Unafraid to plot its own course, the 12-year-old partnership that is Achaval-Ferrer has always sought to make the most individually styled wines in Argentina. Relying on single vineyards for all but its blended Mendoza Malbec, Achaval-Ferrer, founded primarily by Argentines Santiago Achaval and Manuel Ferrer along with Italians Roberto Cipresso and Tiziano Siviero, makes stylish cuvées with names like Finca Mirador, Finca Bella Vista and Quimera.

Bodega Catena Zapata

Based in the Agrelo section of Mendoza, Argentina, Catena Zapata is known for its high-end, high-altitude Malbecs, which are some of the best, most consistent wines coming out of this expanding wine power of a country. Now largely under the leadership of Laura Catena, daughter of Nicolás, Catena maintains its role as a beacon of ingenuity in Argentina's fast-growing wine industry.

Craggy Range

New even by New Zealand's standards, Craggy Range has become one of the country's most admired wineries in less than 15 years. Owner Terry Peabody and Director of Wine and Viticulture Steve Smith, MW, have made it their mission to produce the country's best wines and they have succeeded in many cases. Syrah, Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir all count among New Zealand's best, capable of taking on the world in blind tastings.

DGB

South African wine company DGB is the largest independent wine and spirits producer in the country, representing some of South Africa's finest and most competitively priced wines to the international market. Via brands like the historic Boschendal Estate, an award-winning producer based in Franschhoek, and Douglas Green, an innovative line of environmentally friendly, affordable wines, DGB is at the forefront of placing South African wines on the global map.

Viña San Pedro

If there were a Best Buy Hall of Fame, San Pedro from Chile would be a first-ballot inductee. With more than 2,500 hectares of vineyard holdings in nearly every established Chilean wine region, San Pedro, under the leadership of CEO Javier Bitar, has become a quality-conscious, multi-tiered winery known for excellent value across all price points.

WINEMAKER

Frederic Bonnafous and Guillaume Pouthier

Frédéric Bonnafous and Guillaume Pouthier are winemakers for négociant Dourthe properties in Bordeaux. These young pioneers make wine in the vineyards using both science and judgment tempered by experience. In groundbreaking work for Bordeaux, they study water balance and hydric stress in different blocks, enabling them to determine when to have cover crops, when to manage the canopy and when to pick even more precisely than before. The result is great wine.

Bob Cabral

Bob Cabral stepped into the unenviable position of taking over winemaking duties at the iconic Russian River Valley winery, Williams Selyem, from founding vintner Burt Williams. Cabral has succeeded in maintaining the legendary quality and in some areas exceeding it, with the fabled Pinot Noirs as well as renowned Chardonnays, Zinfandels and late-harvest wines.

Genevieve Janssens

Nearing her 30th anniversary at Robert Mondavi Winery—her 13th as chief winemaker—Genevieve Janssens remains a steady hand on the tiller despite the winery's changes in ownership. A strong case can be made that RMW wines are better than ever, as this determined woman is maintaining her focus on quality, harnessing the power of California fruit to create wines with the elegance and structure of Bordeaux.

Zelma Long

A trailblazer for women and all-around icon of the industry, Long began her illustrious career as an enologist at Robert Mondavi Winery and never looked back. In addition to being winemaker ('79–'88) and CEO ('89–'96) of Simi Winery as well as owner of Long Vineyards in Napa Valley and Vilafonte in South Africa, she has consulted at numerous estates around the world including California, Washington, Argentina, Israel, Italy and France.

Philippe Melka

Philippe Melka has made his reputation as a winemaker half a world away from his native France, consulting for some of Napa Valley's greatest producers of Cabernet Sauvignon. A partial client list reads like an all-star roster: Lail, Bryant Family, Quintessa, Caldwell, Marston, Seavey, Hundred Acre, Vineyard 29. Since 1996, Philippe and his wife Cherie have also made and sold wines under their own label.

WINE REGION

Rhône Valley

France's Rhône Valley has been on a roll in recent years, turning out vintage after vintage of flavorful successes. Early releases suggest that 2009 continues that string, providing a wealth of delicious choices for today's wine consumers. From the spicy all-Syrah wines of the north to the voluptuous Grenache-based blends of the south, the entire Rhône Valley has a consistent track record of excellence.

Ribera del Duero

In 1982 when Ribera del Duero became an official denominación de origen, there were eight wineries in the region. Now there are more than 220. Despite such growth, Ribera is fully dedicated to quality over quantity; it is producing more excellent Tempranillo-based wines than any other region in Spain. As evidence, Wine Enthusiast this year awarded its first-ever 100-point score to a Spanish wine: Viña Sastre's 2006 Pesus.

Russian River Valley

Sonoma's leading appellation, the RRV shows a diversity of grape varieties combined with top-quality winemaking that is unrivaled anywhere else in California. Pinot Noir put it on the world map, but nearly every other type, from sparkling to Chardonnay, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel, is among the top in the state. In 2010, the Valley continues to be the source of stellar bottlings.

Prosecco

Prosecco has defied gloomy economic forecasts to become the hottest imported wine in the U.S. and an enduring symbol of the fun and good cheer wine brings us in difficult moments. Bubbly, bright and optimistic, this easygoing Italian sparkler has been given prestigious DOCG status and the rules have been rewritten to protect the grape and the stunningly beautiful territory of Prosecco.

Willamette Valley

Long recognized as the epicenter of Oregon Pinot Noir production, the Willamette Valley AVA has over 200 wineries and produces excellent Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and sparkling wine. Tourism is thriving, highlighted by the annual International Pinot Noir Conference.

DISTILLER

Beefeater Gin

Beefeater Gin, a British stalwart founded in 1820 and the only premium London Dry Gin still made in London, revitalized the brand thanks to its recent and innovative rollout of new products. The tea-infused Beefeater 24, as well as its limited-edition Summer and Winter gin concepts, have met with critical and bartender acclaim.

Cooper Spirits for St-Germain

St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur has established itself as a modern classic, moving from cult mixologist favorite to mainstream must-have in the space of just a few years. Created by Cooper Spirits President Robert J. Cooper, a third-generation distiller, St-Germain is crafted in the artisanal French style from 100% handpicked fresh elderflower blossoms.

Hangar One

With more than 20 years of experience in brandy and Cognac, Ansley Coale and Jorg Rupf set out to make an artisan vodka with real, unadulterated ingredients. Based out of a former California airline hangar, this niche product debuted in 2002 and was named "vodka of the year" by three separate publications.

Jack Daniel's

Jack Daniel's, the best-selling whiskey in the world, was established in 1866 and is crafted at America's oldest registered distillery in the small town of Lynchburg, Tennessee. J.D. holds its own as one of the most recognizable brands, while Jack & Coke ranks consistently among the most popular drinks at on-premise accounts—further testament to its broad appeal.

Milagro Tequila

Milagro Tequila is an award-winning Tequila brand from William Grant & Sons. Launched in 1997 by Mexico City residents Daniel Schneeweiss and Moises Guindi, Milagro ("miracle" in Spanish) is handcrafted in small batches from estate-grown 100% blue agave in the highlands of Jalisco, Mexico. Fans have also commented on the striking bottle, which features a glass rendition of an agave plant.

IMPORTER

Aveníu Brands

Aveníu Brands, under its Europe-based parent company, Grupo Codorníu, specializes in distinctive brands born in the world's foremost production regions, with pricing that represents significant value versus their competitors. They are the exclusive U.S. marketer for approximately 30 wine and spirits brands from eight different countries including Africa, Europe, North America and South America. Many of the wines that Aveníu Brands markets in the United States are company-owned, allowing them to fully control quality and offer them to consumers at the lowest price possible.

Fine Estates From Spain

Málaga-born Jorge Ordoñez and his Fine Estates From Spain import more top-quality Spanish labels than most other importers combined. Based in suburban Boston, Ordoñez has over time identified and made available standout Spanish wineries such as Emilio Moro, Llopart and Finca Allende, among dozens of others, as well as fine value brands including Protocolo and Borsao.

Kermit Lynch

Wine importer, retailer and author Kermit Lynch introduced a generation of Americans to the idea of wine as a reflection of a place (terroir) and the people who produce it. The Kermit Lynch brand has become synonymous with quality. His exceptionally chosen portfolio of wines includes legendary producers like Domaine Tempier, Vieux Télégraphe, Auguste Clape and Marcel Lapierre, as well as lesser-known discoveries from smaller producers throughout France and Italy.

Preiss Imports

As a boutique spirits company specializing in high-end esoteric brands, for 20 years Preiss Imports has represented a diverse portfolio of products imported from small companies around the world. While Preiss's primary specialty is single-malt Scotch, the company also imports brands such as super-premium Tequila Chinaco and the award-winning Parfait Amour Crème de Violet.

TGIC Importers

Founded 25 years ago by Chilean-born Alex Guarachi, TGIC is now the premier U.S. importer of South American wines. Key brands in the Woodland Hills, California-based company's book include former New World Winery award winner Montes S.A. and Santa Ema (both from Chile), as well as Argentine pace setters Norton, Pascual Toso and Achaval-Ferrer (a 2010 nominee for New World Winery of the Year).



THE HONOREES FOR 2009

Top row left:

Innovator of the Year: Gary Vaynerchuk, Wine Library TV

Wine Region of the Year: Valpolicella, Franco Sartori

New World New World Winery of the Year: Robert Hill Smith, owner, Yalumba, Australia

American Winery of the Year: Roger Trinchero, CEO, Trinchero Family Estates, California

Lifetime Achievement: Harvey Chaplin, Chairman and CEO, Southern Wine & Spirits

Man of the Year: Ted Baseler, President/CEO, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Washington

Distiller of the Year: Hendrick's, Simon Hunt, President

Winemaker of the Year: Scott McLeod, Rubicon Estate, California

Bottom row left:

Restaurateur of the Decade: Alan Stillman, Founder, Fourth Wall Restaurants

European Winery of the Year: Mezzacorona (Italy), Claudio Rizzoli

Retailer of the Year: Best Cellars at A&P, Joshua Wesson

Importer of the Year: Winebow, Leonardo LoCascio, Founder

Master of Ceremonies: Adam Strum, Chairman, Wine Enthusiast Companies, Publisher and Editor, Wine Enthusiast Media

RETAILER

Bounty Hunter

Based in downtown Napa, Bounty Hunter started off as a destination for wine country tourists seeking impossible-to-find wines. But founder Mark Steven Pope soon realized that consumers want more than that. Today, Bounty Hunter has added a wine bar and barbecue dining to its storefront. The shop pioneered the creation of own-label wines, both as a négociant and vintner, further enhancing the uniqueness of the Bounty Hunter experience.

Sherry-Lehmann

An icon among New York wine retailers, Sherry-Lehmann was founded during the Prohibition era by Jack Aaron. This year, the East Side Manhattan retailer celebrated its 76th anniversary as one of America's premier wine and spirits sellers by naming Chris Adams its new CEO (he replaces Michael Aaron, son of Jack). Sherry-Lehman is also three years into its



run at a modern, renovated location at Park Avenue and 59th Street.

Stew Leonard's

With nine locations across New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and aspirations of many more to come, Stew Leonard's offers a wide selection of wines, beers and spirits at superb values. They promote professional training of their staff through both the WSET and Society of Wine Educators programs and encourage them to be friendly and courteous, which results in both a pleasant and truly informative experience for customers.

Trader Joe's

Since 1967, American shoppers have come to depend on Trader Joe's for gourmet foods and fine wines at affordable prices, in an atmosphere of elegant convenience. The chain, which now numbers at least 343 stores in 25 states, was recognized as the nation's second best supermarket chain by Consumer Reports. TJ's is famous for being the exclusive retailer of Charles Shaw Wine ("Two-Buck Chuck"), but also stocks a wide range of well-priced California and New World wines.

Vino Volo

Amid the hustle and bustle of metropolitan airports, Vino Volo is an oasis, a world away from fast food and souvenir shops. Vino Volo, founded in 2004, has 10 outlets in airports nationwide: elegant wine bars combined with boutique wine stores offering well-priced and keenly edited wines. Weary travelers can relax in leather chairs, enjoying wines by the glass with gourmet fare, then purchase their favorite bottles to go, or shop online from home.

INNOVATOR

Hall Winery

Hall's gold certification by the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED rating system in 2010 made it the first winery in California to be so honored. LEED is an internationally recognized certification system that measures a building's environmental performance. The Green Building Council honored Hall's performance in sustainable practices ranging from energy-efficient radiant floors to the use of solar energy and water conservation.

Alain Juppé

The former mayor of Bordeaux and former French prime minister, Alain Juppé started work on grand restoration and building projects to transform this beautiful city. He was the driving force for the Bordeaux Fête le Vin festival. Now, he is behind the development of a cultural and scientific center devoted to wine. This is innovation on a grand scale that has benefited both a great city and great wines.

Libera Terra

Libera Terra, or "free land," is a farming cooperative in Sicily that uses land confiscated from the Mafia to produce agricultural products. They sell pasta, legumes, olive oil and wine under the Centopassi label (Nero d'Avola, Grillo and Catarratto). Libera Terra also offers farm stays for tourist. The goal is to stimulate local economies and coordinate civil responsibility against organized crime.

Murphy-Goode

The winery's "A Really Goode Job" campaign online was the wine world's biggest social media sensation of 2009. It made international headlines, represented a huge breakthrough in the use of social media by wineries for marketing, earned Murphy-Goode millions of dollars in free publicity and took the use of social media to a whole new level.

The New Zealand Wine Industry

Well known as leaders in the adoption of screwcaps, the New Zealand wine industry has innovated in other ways as well, encouraging their growers to limit yields to prevent oversupply and engaging in cutting-edge research on methoxypyrazines. Home to the world's first carbon-zero winery, New Zealand's wine industry continues to foster the clean, green image so valuable in the current marketplace.

RESTAURATEUR

Tom Colicchio

After cofounding New York's Gramercy Tavern in 1994 and creating the Craft restaurant group, Colicchio has brought the thrill of cooking in a professional kitchen into American homes as head judge and mentor on all seven seasons of "Top Chef." In 2010, he earned three stars from The New York Times for his Colicchio & Sons restaurant and was named the nation's Outstanding Chef by the James Beard Foundation after reaching the finals seven times since 2002.

Tyler Florence

The star of Food Network's "Food 911," "How to Boil Water" and now "The Great Food Truck Race," Florence is also a board member of the educational nonprofit Afterschool Alliance and creator of the Tyler Florence Shop cookery equipment emporium. In 2010, Florence penned a new cookbook, Family Meal: Bringing People Together Never Tasted Better; unveiled the iPhone app, Tyler Florence Fast; launched Wayfare Tavern, a restaurant inspired by early 20th century California cuisine; and has two more dining spots opening shortly.

Danny Meyer

Meyer pioneered a new breed of casual fine dining with Union Square Cafe, rephrased a classic American genre at Gramercy Tavern and has succeeded in restaurant formats ranging from pit barbecue (Blue Smoke), to museum dining (The Modern), to ballpark food (at Citi Field.) In 2010 he inked a partnership with the historic Saratoga Race Course, launched the corporate training business, Hospitality Quotient, and marked his company's 21st James Beard Award when Eleven Madison Park's Daniel Humm was named "Best Chef: New York City".

Michael Mina

With two James Beard awards and two Michelin stars for the Mina Group's 18 high profile properties scattered across the country, Cairo-born, Washington-raised Mina has become one of America's most prolific chef/restaurateurs. Mina will open two San Francisco restaurants in 2010: the fifth location of Bourbon Steak and a re-launch of his Michael Mina flagship.

Gordon Ramsay

When injury sidelined a promising soccer career, Ramsay found his calling in the culinary arts. Since receiving two Michelin stars for restaurant Aubergine, Ramsey has earned an OBE from Queen Elizabeth II by producing a cavalcade of books, restaurants, pubs and TV shows including "Hell's Kitchen" and "Kitchen Nightmares." This year, Ramsay premiered the TV show "Masterchef U.S.", penned two cookbooks, re-launched restaurant Pétrus, whose cellar boasts 30-plus Pétrus vintages, opened maze Grill in Australia, maze Doha in Qatar and is restoring London's historic Savoy Grill. WE

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SANTA EMA 1856

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2006 Catalina 92 PTS WA



BODEGA NORTON

Quality

2007 Privada 91 PTS WS



ACHAVAL FERRER BODEGA

Passion

2007 Bella Vista Malbec 96 PTS WA



Che GAUCHO SINCE 1890

Value

2008 Malbec NEW



KAIKEN

Exceptional

2007 Ultra Malbec 90 PTS WE



LOTENGO ARGENTINA

Stimulating

2009 Malbec 87 PTS "Best Buy" WE



Bodegas y Viñedos PASCUAL TOSO S.A.

Tradition

2007 Alta Reserve Malbec 93 PTS WE



ANDREW PEACE WINES

Integrity

2009 Red Blend NEW



OMAKA SPRINGS ESTATES

New World

2007 Sauvignon Blanc 90 PTS WES



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Excellence

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GANCIA

The art of Spumante

According to a Pioneer in Italian Sparkling Wine

Ask Lamberto Gancia to select three words to describe his family's sparkling wines, and the dynamic executive weighs his words carefully: "tradition, passion and innovation." Then, in a quick burst of offhanded spontaneity, he adds three more: "joy, happiness and lifestyle."

Spumante is the Italian word for "sparkling wine," and the historic company, Gancia, based in northern Italy, has done more than any other to render the idea of Italian bubbly – a wine with a happy and proud tradition that rivals that of Champagne. Gancia is a market leader with quintessentially Italian sparklers such as Asti, Moscato d'Asti, Prosecco and Metodo Classico (Italian bottle fermented); and the company has achieved its many successes as the only large sparkling wine company that is family-run and 100 percent Italian owned. "Because we represent five generations of one family," says Lamberto Gancia, owner with brother Massimiliano and cousin Edoardo Gancia, "we have the flexibility to adopt to new trends and new markets as our world evolves."

Now, with this new generation at the helm of the 160-year-old company, Gancia is making inroads in the United States and is teaching us to love spumante.

Tradition

Founded in 1850 by Carlo Gancia in the sleepy town of Canelli, in Piedmont, Gancia is the premier pioneer behind Italian sparkling wine. Thanks to his scientific background, Carlo Gancia loved to experiment and because family tradition linked him to grape growing, he moved to France to study winemaking. The méthode champenoise (the traditional process by which sparkling wines are made thanks to secondary fermentation in the bottle) was of particular interest to him. When Carlo Gancia moved back to Italy, he produced the first Italian "champagne" (also known as Metodo Classico) and created a sweet sparkling wine with the local Moscato grape. That wine became known as Asti Spumante and the patented "Gancia method" was born. In fact, UNESCO has recognized his historic wine cellars as part of our cultural patrimony. Carlo Gancia today is remembered as the inventor of Italian sparkling wine and Gancia's Carlo Gancia Cuvée Platinum is dedicated to his memory.



Lamberto, Massimiliano and Edoardo Gancia, fifth generation owners of the historic winery.





Gancia advertising posters from the 1950's and before are an art collector's item today.

Passion

Over the years, the company evolved and the world of sparkling wines became increasingly competitive. Lamberto Gancia explains that his company long ago decided that the best way to maintain its important historic legacy was with a dedicated focus on quality. "We invested in new technology, implemented more intense controls during production, and raised our quality standards on our selection of grapes," he says: "We also introduced two premium lines: Cuvée Platinum and Metodo Classico."

Gancia's dedication radiates far beyond the world of wine. Like Vespa, Cinecittà and cucina Italiana, Gancia is a proud emblem of the "Made in Italy" philosophy. Gancia's advertising posters (representing art styles from futuristic to psychedelic) have become a hot collector's item over the decades. Gancia also sponsors

The **Cuvée Platinum** Line



88 POINTS ***Gancia NV Carlo Gancia Cuvée Platinum Brut (Piedmont); $25.*** Soft tones of baked bread and warm almond are folded within a broader aromatic context of stone fruit, honey and apricot. This is a sophisticated *metodo classico* sparkler with good complexity and an easy but elegant personality at an affordable price.

88 POINTS ***Gancia NV Prosecco Cuvée Platinum Extra Dry (Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore); $15.*** Executed in an Extra Dry, or off-dry, style, this luminous sparkling wine delivers a feminine bouquet of floral tones, stone fruit, honey and talc powder. All these aromas form a pretty aromatic embroidery and the wine is bright and crisp on the close.

87 POINTS ***Gancia 2009 Millesimato Cuvée Platinum (Asti); $14.*** Here's a vintage-dated sweet sparkling wine that opens with a crystalline, luminous appearance and enticing aromas of wildflower, white mineral, honey and stone fruit. The effervescence is tonic and firm and there's a playful touch of bitter almond on the close.

Exciting Sparkling Wines at **Everyday Prices**

86 POINTS **BEST BUY** ***Gancia NV Brut (Prosecco); $12.*** This Brut style Prosecco from Gancia (one of the most historic producers of this popular Italian sparkling wine) offers fresh floral aromas backed by drying mineral tones and pulpy notes of peach and apricot. The finish is crisp, cleansing and tonic.

86 POINTS **BEST BUY** ***Gancia NV Moscato d'Asti; $12.*** Beautifully aromatic Moscato grapes offer loads of honey, sweet peach and passion fruit on the nose. This is a delicate and feminine wine with soft, foamy bubbles capped by generous fruit flavors and natural sweetness.

85 POINTS ***Gancia NV Brachetto d'Acqui; $16.*** You'll love the wild berry and white cherry bouquet on this easy and informal red sparkling dessert wine. You can pair this wine from Northern Italy with light desserts and sponge cake, or with salted appetizers and finger foods.

85 POINTS ***Gancia NV Asti; $12.*** Friendly, easy-going and irresistibly cheerful, this light and luminous Asti delivers delicately fragrant tones of white flower, peach flower and honeysuckle. The mouthfeel is characterized by creamy foam and there's a nice touch of piquant white pepper on the close.

85 POINTS **BEST BUY** ***Gancia NV Grand Reale Spumante (Piedmont); $10.*** Here is a sweet and fragrant dessert wine with aromas of white flower, honey and stone fruit accented by a slightly drying mineral characteristic. Firm, tonic effervescence keeps the palate refreshed even when paired with whipped cream or creamy fruit desserts.



a long list of international events and sporting competitions. Yet despite these recognitions, the company remains firmly rooted in the concepts of family, territory and tradition. "We want to deliver wines that show the best of unique Italian territories," says Lamberto Gancia.

Those territories are in Piedmont where the Moscato grape is grown and produced as sweet, luminous and fragrant sparkling wine. Being an Italian sparkling specialist Gancia includes Prosecco from the Veneto in its portfolio. In fact, Gancia played a key role in the growing success of this popular off dry Italian bubbly: "Prosecco is enjoying enormous success abroad and we believe Moscato will follow the same trend." Gancia's metodo classico wines are made with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes.

Innovation

The past two years, however, have seen the biggest steps forward in Gancia's rapid evolution. The company launched a new look that embodies elegance, modernity and Italian style: "We wanted to approach a younger customer but still offer a high quality product at an affordable price," says Lamberto Gancia, who opted for sleek silver and minimalist packaging on some wines. And, the company transferred its marketing offices from Canelli to Milan in a symbolic move that puts it at the heart of Italy's fashion and finance capital. "We wanted to create a new image," says Lamberto Gancia. "In Milan, we organize events at the Spazio Gancia where three-star Michelin chefs and sommeliers are invited to hold classes and organize food and wine pairings to be closer to our consumers." Spazio Gancia is a contemporary exhibit venue for food and wine events.

"The rules of success in our business are a strong brand, a clearly identifiable territory, good grapes and a good vintage, and good value for money," says Lamberto Gancia: "Gancia has all these assets."

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THE PUSH AND PULL OF TRUST

In our online age, magazines, Web sites and marketers engage in "pull" rather than "push"—inviting the consumer to actively engage rather than passively regard—and, as a result, to trust more than ever.

Trust is all around us, all the time. We trust that the electricity will work when we turn on the lights. We trust that the car will work this morning. We have to trust the security of the Internet when we make a purchase. Sometimes, we even trust the marketing promise.

In its way, wine, too, is based on trust, because it goes through so many stages to reach your table. You trust the label is what it says it is, you trust all the people involved in bringing the bottle to you, from farmer, to producer, to importer, distributor, retailer, restaurateur.

Marketers know all about this trust. In an insightful article in *Advertising Age* last August, Judy Shapiro, chief brand strategist at CloudLinux, wrote about trust in the new ways of communication. Positing new ways of receiving content, communication and applications, she offered the latest paradigm (still to be achieved), what she calls the sixth screen world. "In this sixth screen world, Judy Consumer is finally able to mold her digital world to encompass real-time convergence of her trusted social networks, trusted content and trusted connections. This is when we will live in a perfect 'opt-in' world where Judy Consumer will pull the 'trusted' ads she wants to see and when she wants to see them—sensitive to her physical locations."

This is the latest twist in the shift from "push" marketing, where ads are thrust at you, to "pull" where you, the consumer, can "engage and build something with the brand. Marketing is more about choice and engagement, less than it is a distraction," wrote Derek Daye managing partner of The Blake Project, in *Branding Strategy Insider* in August 2009. One of the results, of course, is that the more up front and personal you feel about a product, the more you may trust it.

How does this relate to wine? It relates because it brings in still further levels of trust to a product with so many layers of trust already. Because now, you will be trusting your social media networks, trusting *Wine Enthusiast* reviewers, the ads from your trusted suppliers targeted at you on your cell phone, all aiming to help you choose a wine for tonight. You will be "friending" people you have never met on Twitter.

Maybe this further trusting is a way of avoiding the hardest trust decision of all: trusting yourself. However often wine lovers are told to trust their judgment, believing in their own palate can be tough. They seek reassurance. Should I buy this wine, who else thinks this wine tastes of black berries, is it too toasty? Tell me, please.

There is a darker side. All this trust has to be earned. However much you are part of the "pull" of the marketing, if there is any break in the perimeter of that circle of trust, the whole model may fall apart. If the wine is wrongly labeled, if the retailer stores it badly, even if your best Twitter friend gives you false information, then the trust is damaged.

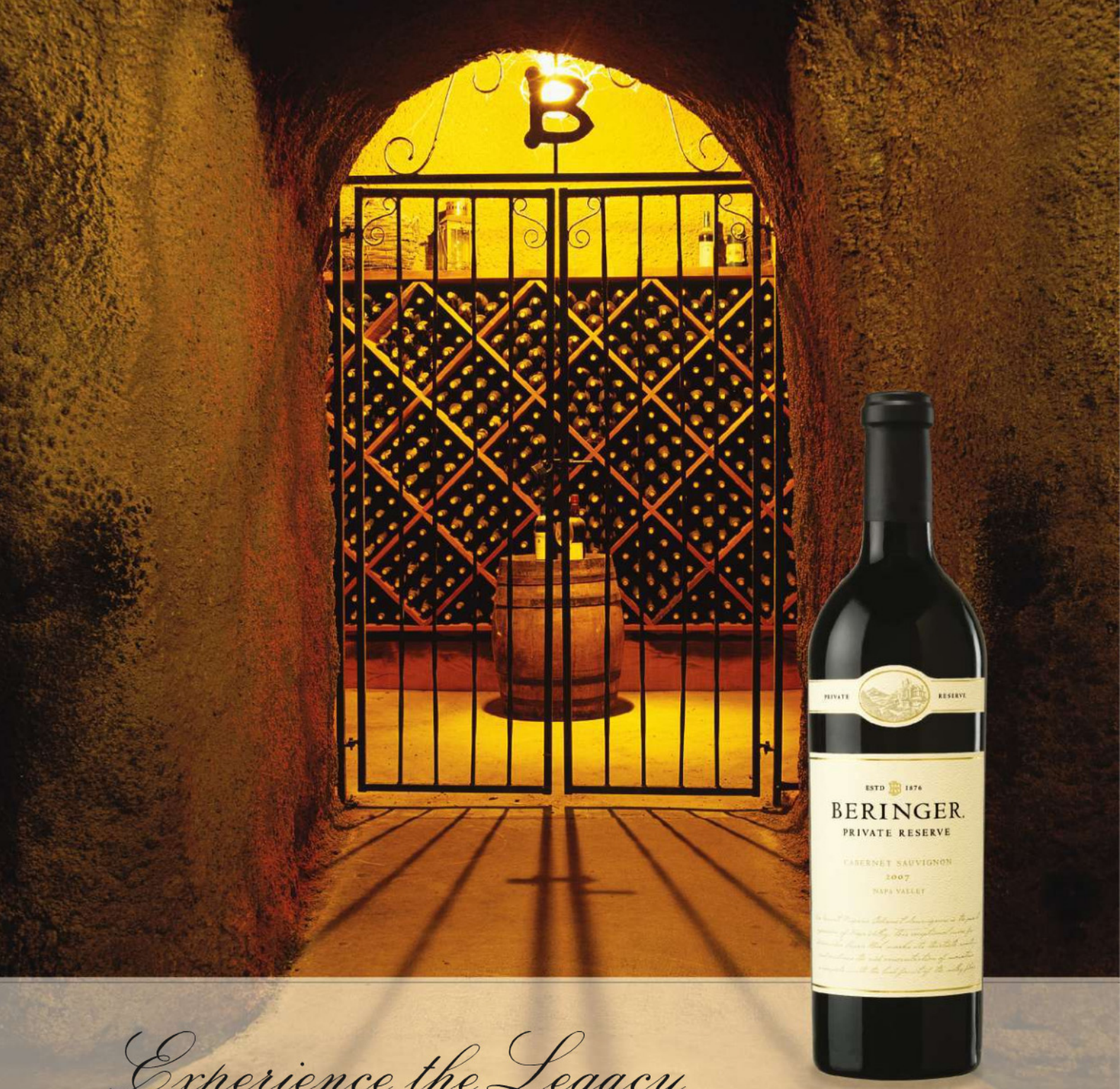
HOWEVER OFTEN WINE LOVERS ARE TOLD TO TRUST THEIR JUDGMENT, BELIEVING IN THEIR OWN PALATE CAN BE TOUGH.

That's why I have a concern about the insistent new marketing, whether it calls itself pull or whether it's plain old-fashioned push. Yes, the new marketing, the social media marketing, does involve us more, does make us feel wanted. Yes, we can always unsubscribe to any number of our networks. (Although always keep in mind, they never really forget you.) But however much the new marketers talk about building trust, the bottom line is they want a sale. It is just that they are more sophisticated.

In the end, it comes back to us to decide whether we want to buy because (a) we need whatever it is, or (b) and (more likely in the case of wine) we like it. And because along the line somewhere, someone we really trust has hit just the right button. Or, maybe, just maybe, we have learned to trust ourselves.

In the end, trust in wine can only come from the wine itself. It is the ultimate and most ancient type of trust—that good wine will give us pleasure, good company and good memories, from the understanding and respect that wine is, at its core, a natural product, that it's finite and really does come from a single (large or small) place.

When we have lost trust in many traditionally trusted organizations, such as banks, we need to place some trust in the pursuit of pleasure found in a 750ml bottle. WE



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PHOTO JON VAN GORDER

TOP 100 BEST BUYS 2010

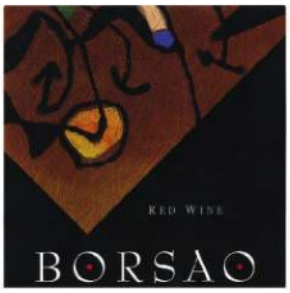
The finest value-priced wines of the year.

BY THE EDITORS OF *WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE*

At the end of the year we tend to count our blessings and take a minute to appreciate the good things in our lives. Family, friends and health deservedly come first, but somewhere near the top of any wine devotee's list has to be the increasing quality of wine, available at prices that make regular enjoyment affordable. We can cite any number of reasons for this, from increased competition to greater attention to detail in the vineyards and winery, but why ask why? Let's just whisper thanks and review the 100 wines that *Wine Enthusiast*'s tasting panelists felt offered the highest quality for the price in 2010.

If a wine's score on the *Wine Enthusiast* 100-point scale is high in relation to its price (a very precise formula we keep to ourselves, but 88-points and $10 are approximate yardsticks), it merits a Best Buy designation. Only about 5% of the wines we review annually merit this designation, and what you're seeing on these next pages is a very elite grouping drawn from that already limited group. Enjoy, shop wisely, drink well, give thanks.

1



89 Borsao 2008 Red Wine (Campo de Borja); $8. Almost impossible to distinguish this nice and easy Garnacha from the winery's Monte Oton label (also rated 89). Open berry and jam aromas keep it together, while the saturated, sweet blackberry palate is living proof of Campo de Borja's sun and terroir. Ripe, deep and easy to enjoy. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain.

2



92 Pacific Rim 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); $11. A classic Washington tasting-room Riesling—only better. Opulent and fruity, with apricots, star anise, mint, a very nice spicy streak that lifts it up, and adds a lot of complexity. Smooth and supple, it coats the palate, captures some floral highlights, even a bit of marshmallow.

3

91 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Casa Carmenère (Rapel Valley); $13. One of the best value-priced, big and rich wines you're likely to find. The nose impresses with potent blackberry, cedar and marzipan aromas, and the palate bridges the gap between power and elegance. Tastes great, with herbal black cherry and cola leading the way. Very ripe but really well made. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA.

4

90 Bogle 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); $11. Here's a stellar example of how a really good Cabernet can be made without gouging the consumer. This is a dry, elegant and rich wine, with firm tannins housing flavors of blackberries, currants, herbs, spices and smoky cedar wood. It's a terrific value. 100,000 cases made.

5



87 Bandit NV Pinot Grigio (California); $4/500 ml. Packaged in a little green Tetrapak, this is a very nice white wine. It's totally dry, and the lime and grapefruit flavors are balanced with ultra-crisp acidity. Great with grilled veggies, sole with a squeeze of lemon, and Asian fare.

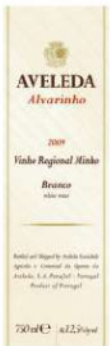
6

90 Companhia das Quintas 2006 Fronteira (Douro); $10. You can taste the dry, wild upper Douro in this powerful wine. It has exotic chocolate, black fig and nutmeg flavors, along with a rich, dark texture and plenty of accompanying tannins. The acidity cuts through, but this is about dense power. Imported by Admiral Imports.

7

90 Tenuta di Ceppaiano 2005 Alle Viole (Toscana); $12. Alle Viole is a penetrating blend of Sangiovese, Cabernet and Merlot with an extra oak element that comes off as spice, campfire and smoked bacon. At the center of this wine, however, is a solid base of red fruit that recalls cherry and blackberry. The wine is fresh and tonic but full and generous at the same time. Imported by Biagio Cru & Estate Wines, LLC.

8



92 Aveleda 2009 Alvarinho (Minho); $13. Alvarinho is the grape of northern Vinho Verde, giving a style that is rich and complex. The fruit here fits that character, packed with pear, apple and citrus flavors and a light texture of lime zest. Note: this wine is commercialized as Follies Alvarinho outside the U.S. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.

READ THE WEAVE

Fiaschi, the traditional basket-encased packaging for Chianti Classico, not only look nice and protect the product, but their design—specifically, the basket-stitching pattern—once doubled as primitive labels. Those with a horizontal weave indicated export wines, while those woven vertically were destined for domestic markets.

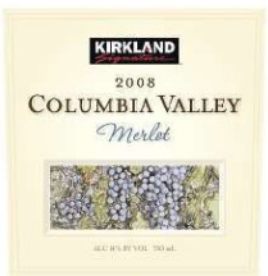
9

89 Altos del Cuco 2008 Yecla; $10. A smooth wine for the price where all the dots connect. The nose has black cherry and raisin, while the palate is lush, deep and concentrated, with rewarding flavors of cherry, cassis and roasted plum. Lasting on the finish, with a licorice flavor. Very good wine for the money; Monastrell/Syrah/Tempranillo is the blend. Imported by Opici Import Company.

10

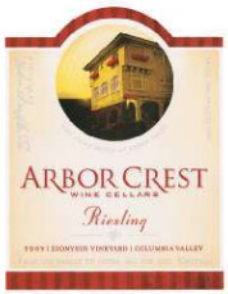
89 Carlos Basso 2008 Dos Fincas Cabernet Sauvignon-Malbec (Uco Valley); $10. Meaty and earthy, with leather and early sulfur to the nose. The palate is big, round and grabby, with warm, lush berry fruit and scattershot accents of herbs and leather. Delivers a ton of oomph for the price, and also good berry and herbal finishing flavors. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Malbec. Imported by Southern Wine Group.

11



90 Kirkland Signature 2008 Merlot (Columbia Valley); $10. Another fine value from Kirkland, the Costco house brand. Vineyard sources are first rate, mostly Wahluke Slope, and the wine has exceptional grip, depth and structure for Merlot at this price point. Cassis, dark plum, black cherry, licorice, espresso and smoke are woven together nicely. Tannins are lush, substantial and quite ripe; they wrap up the wine with a blanket of smoke and tar. A great steak wine.

12



91 Arbor Crest 2009 Dionysus Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); $8. This is fruit sourced from a 1972 planting—single-vineyard, old-vine Riesling at an amazing price. Done in a big, round, fruity, off-dry style, it's loaded with sweet pineapple, Meyer lemon and honey peach flavors. The fruit concentration is spectacular, and yet the wine retains enough acidity to feel balanced against the 3.5% residual sugar. Serve with hot and spicy Asian fare, or with a peach cobbler for dessert.

13



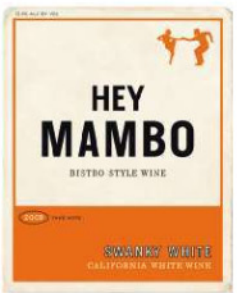
89 Rotari NV Rosé Talento (Trento); $14. Elegant and tight, this pale pink sparkling wine boasts a wide array of small fruit and floral aromas. This vibrant wine would pair well with fried calamari or shellfish thanks to its delicate nature and bright acidity. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp.

14



89 DFJ Vinhos 2006 Alta Corte (Estremadura); $9. A blend of Caradoc (a cross of Malbec and Grenache) and Tinto Roriz, this is a bold ripe wine that pushes its vivid berry fruits right up front along with some dark tannins. Black cherries and figs show well at the end, along with wood spice and acidity. Imported by Dionysos Imports Inc.

15



89 Hey Mambo 2008 Swanky White (California); $10. What a nice wine for bistro-style drinking. Conjures up pairing with almost everything, from tempura to grilled chicken to pork enchiladas. Bone dry and crisp, it offers outstanding flavors of citrus fruits, petrol, wildflowers, grass, minerals, honey and spices. A blend of Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscat Canelli and Chenin Blanc.

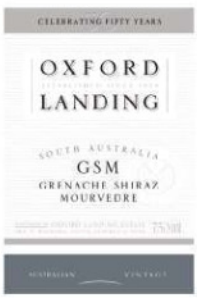
WHISTLER TREE

The "Whistler Tree" near Aguas de Moura, Portugal—named for its resident songbirds—is the world's largest and oldest cork tree. Planted in 1783, it's said to produce the world's finest wine corks and is cultivated every nine years, each harvest yielding enough bark to cap 100,000 bottles.

16

91 Château Peyros 2005 Tannat-Cabernet (Madiran); $13. There is a solid amount of wood here, but the fruit has weight enough for it. The tannins are dark, brooding in character, but they also support ripe and juicy fruits. With its dusty texture, this wine could certainly be aged for several years. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd.

17



88 Oxford Landing 2007 GSM Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvèdre (South Australia); $8. A remarkable value, Oxford Landing's GSM is a convincing argument in favor of blending. It offers a complex mélange of leather, spice and cherry notes, medium body and a fresh, vivacious finish. Considering it can probably be found for around $80 per case, this would make a great everyday wine for drinking over the next year or so. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc.

18

90 Hyatt Vineyards 2008 Pinot Gris (Rattlesnake Hills); $9. Firm and full of fresh pear and apple and white peach fruit flavors. A clever blend that includes Muscat, Viognier and Riesling. Crisp and full-bodied, with a very clean and refreshing mouthfeel that extends into a bright, satisfying finish.

19



90 Lopez Noceti 2008 1919 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Great Malbec for the money, and one that gives the impression that it's three or four times more expensive than it is. From 40-year-old vines, this is concentrated and complex, with graphite, plum, prune and blackberry aromas. The palate is heavy but correct, and the primary flavors of berry and plum segue into fig and chocolate with ease.

20

89 Viña Casablanca 2008 Cefiro Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); $10. A totally correct but well-priced Cab that brings pretty much everything the textbook calls for. The nose features graphite, berry and smoky wood, while the mouthfeel is spot-on and made better by ripe, toasty berry, chocolate and spice flavors. A definite winner at its price point. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA.

21

89 Marrenon 2008 Chardonnay (Vin de Pays de Vaucluse); $10. A recent discovery, this Chardonnay (yes, Chardonnay) has a striking bouquet of flowers, spices, honey and nuts, then adds a peachy fruit component on the palate. It's medium in weight, with a lush texture and a long finish. A super bargain to drink over the summer months. Imported by USA Wine Imports.

22



90 Razor's Edge 2008 Shiraz-Grenache (McLaren Vale); $12. Fully ripe and verging on jammy, this 75-25 blend is nonetheless charming, with raspberry fruit cosseted by lashings of vanilla. It's round in the mouth and exceedingly supple, picking up intriguing dusty spice, cocoa and coffee notes on the finish. A notable value for drinking over the next 6–12 months. Imported by American Wine Distributors.

23

89 Excelsior 2009 Chardonnay (Robertson); $10. This lively Chardonnay starts with lemon, lime and pear on the nose, followed by a terrific combination of crisp citrus fruit and oaky, white fruit roundness. Elegant but fun, it's a perfect food wine. Think spicy ethnic cuisine, grilled seafood, salads. Imported by Cape Classics.

24



88 Turning Leaf 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); $8. A wonderful appetizer wine, dry, clean and zesty in acidity, with appealing citrus, apple, lemongrass, vanilla and honeysuckle fla-

SKIN CONTACT

During the growth stage known as veraison, anthocyanins (in red grapes) and carotenoids (in whites) replace chlorophyll, giving the grapes their color. You can't make red wine with white grapes, but you can make white wine with red grapes. Most grape juice itself has no pigment, and only acquires color after prolonged exposure to the skins.

vors. A great restaurant by-the-glass sipper. Production was 136,000 cases.

25

88 Columbia Crest 2007 Two Vines Cabernet Sauvignon (Washington); $8. This is the best Cab from Two Vines to date. It's got real concentration and fruit flavor, enhanced with the addition of 11% Cab Franc and 7% Syrah in the blend. Berries, cherries, cassis, plums, coffee and smoke filter through the palate, with just a little bite to the tannins. Very impressive.

26

92 Bacalhôa Wines of Portugal 2007 Catarina (Terras do Sado); $12. The flagship white from Bacalhôa is a full-bodied blend of Fernão Pires and Chardonnay. There is both freshness and richness here, with a tight texture of lime zest and apple skins giving lively acidity. The finish is more tropical, with smooth creamy flavors. Imported by Admiral Imports.

27

91 Kanonkop 2008 Kadette (Stellenbosch); $15. This blend of Pinotage, Cabernet, Merlot and Cabernet Franc is full-bodied and complex, with layered aromas of cherry, banana and warming spices, and smooth, elegant flavors of cedar, cherry, tobacco smoke and red berries. Velvety, soft tannins and a clean finish give it a classy touch. The wine can age, but drink now and you won't be disappointed. Imported by Cape Classics.

28

90 Brassfield 2008 Serenity (High Valley); $11. A beautiful white blend, one of the best values on the market. Made from Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Gewürztraminer and Sémillon, it shows a near-perfect balance of crisp acidity, clean minerality, dryness and complex citrus fruit, peach, lychee, mineral and honeysuckle flavors. A compelling restaurant by-the-glass wine.

29



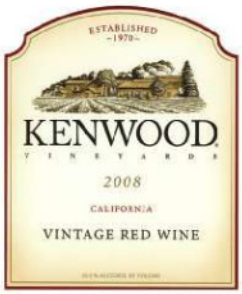
89 Robert Pepi 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (California); $11. Fills an important niche in California whites, a bone-dry, tartly crisp, minerally wine that gets the mouth watering. With pleasant citrus, floral and peppery spice flavors, it's perfect as a cocktail sipper with appetizers, like puff pastries, grilled veggies, toast rounds with goat cheese.

30



89 MAN Vintners 2008 Shiraz (Coastal Region); $11. Smoke and roobios tea dominate the bouquet, with accents of raspberry and cocoa. The mouth is more of the same with soft notes of black plum guts and berry preserves fleshing it out. The texture is like crushed velvet with assertive tannins and structured acidity. Drinkable now, though could age for another year or two. Imported by Vineyard Brands.

31



88 Kenwood 2008 Vintage Red Wine (California); $9. A great success, as this bottling has been for decades. The wine, which is a blend of Petite Sirah, Merlot and Sangiovese, is dry and rich and balanced, showing lots of finesse in the cherry, currant, licorice, mocha and cedar flavors. Easy to find, with 24,000 cases produced.

32

87 Mezzacorona 2009 Pinot Grigio (Vigneti delle Dolomiti); $9. The quality-price ratio here is simply unbeatable. Mezzacorona presents a fuller, rounder, more satisfying Pinot Grigio with ripe aromas of peach, pear and honey. There's a smooth, creamy feel in the mouth. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp.

33

92 Whitman Cellars 2008 Riesling (Columbia Valley); $14. This is the first Riesling from Whitman, and it's a beauty. Lovely, inviting aromas mix roses and rocks, leading into fresh, layered, complex fruit flavors of pear, apple, white peach and orange. It's got plenty of acid so the residual sugar is almost undetectable, but the alcohol stays at a Germanic 12.5%. This is so good it makes you wish that winemaker Steve Lessard had been doing Riesling all along.

CORKS TAKE FLIGHT

A Champagne cork leaves the bottle at 38–40 miles per hour on average, but is easily capable, some say, of 100. That may well have been the case during the world's longest recorded cork flight, achieved by Heinrich Medicus at Woodbury Vineyards in upstate New York: 177 feet and 9 inches, from a starting height of 4 feet.

34



89 Laurent Miquel 2007 Père et Fils Cabernet Syrah (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $10. With 60% Cabernet and 40% Syrah, this is an intense and well-structured wine that offers a ton of bang for your buck. The rich and powerful nose is loaded with aromas of blackberry, black raspberry sauce, wild strawberry and soft licorice spice. Full and lush in the mouth with the strong fruit character leading nicely to the cocoa and coffee flavors that dominate the lingering finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

35

90 Quarles Harris 2005 Late Bottled Vintage Port; $13. A deliciously rich, sweet and youthfully fruity wine that has an opulent feel to it. There is a juicy element, with fresh acidity, but most of the character comes from the ripe fruit, the jelly character and the sweet tannins. It needs more bottle age. Imported by Vineyard Brands.

36



89 Analivia 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); $11. Nice and fresh, and definitely the best vintage of Analivia we've tasted to date. The nose bursts with floral aromas, apricot, apple and minerality, while the palate is clean as a whistle, with apple, tangerine and pineapple flavors. Slightly pithy on the finish, but that's normal for Verdejo from Rueda. Imported by Luneau USA Inc.

37

89 Dry Creek Vineyard 2009 Fumé Blanc (Sonoma County); $12. This is a delicious, balanced Sauvignon Blanc that's the equal of many wines costing much more, which makes it a great value. It features lemon and lime flavors made richer by notes of pineapples and honeysuckle. Entirely unoaked, it's a great cocktail sipper.

38



89 Santa Julia 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $11. Chunky, stout and solid on the nose, with round, pure flavors of black cherry and raspberry. The mouthfeel is comfortable and complete, especially for an $11 wine from Argentina. Finishes dry, smooth and slightly spicy; very pleasing in a no-nonsense way. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

39



89 Acrobat 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); $12. Even better than the excellent 2008 Acrobat, this ups the alcohol to about 13% and gives the impression of dryness, though there might be a trace of residual sugar. In any event, it's loaded with pretty pear fruit flavor, lightly dusted with cinnamon spice, and fills the mouth with its body and gentle hint of spritz. A fine summer sipper.

40

88 Château Lagrezette 2005 Zette Rouge Malbec (Cahors); $9. In a modern, smooth style, with plush fruit and dusty tannins, this is a ripe, open wine, an easy expression of Malbec, New World in its fruitiness. Imported by USA Wine West.

41

91 Thistle 2008 Pinot Blanc (Dundee Hills); $15. Tasty with terrific dry extract, this excellent Pinot Blanc stands out with a palate-pleasing mix of grapefruit, pineapple and citrus rind. Sharp and penetrating, it lingers into a graceful finish annotated with toasted hazelnuts.

GREEN HARVESTING

In a process known as green harvesting, vintners prune a portion of immature grapes from the vine with the belief it will provide an additional energy boost to the remaining bunches, helping them to better ripen and acquire higher concentrations of flavor compounds.

42



89 Wines & Winemakers 2008 Azul Portugal (Douro); $10. Ripe and smooth wine, with a rich Port-like aroma, the sweet fruit structured with some fresh stalky tannins. Great herbal and wild berry flavors to finish. Imported by Iberia Wine & Spirits LLC.

43

90 Plantagenet 2006 Hazard Hill Shiraz (Western Australia); $13. A terrific value, Plantagenet's 2006 Hazard Hill Shiraz is a silky, feminine-styled Shiraz that starts with smoky, slightly floral notes, then adds in peppery spice, delicate red berries and just a hint of chocolate before leaving your mouth watering on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars.

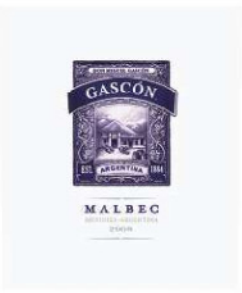
44

88 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2008 Chardonnay (Sicilia); $9. You've got to hand it to the folks at this estate: they make nice wines at low prices. This Sicilian Chardonnay is bright and creamy with aromas of orange blossom, almond, golden honey and mature apricot. The wine feels crisp and pristine in the mouth. Very nice. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp.

AGED TO PERFECTION

Most archeological wine finds yield only empty bottles with traces of its former contents, but Speyer, Germany may have the oldest containing actual liquid. A silt-filled glass amphora was excavated there from a Roman-era stone sarcophagus, estimated to date from 325 A.D.

45

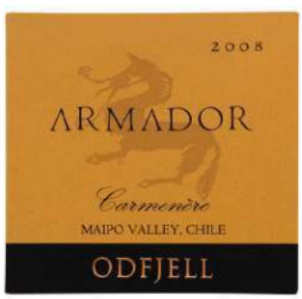


90 Don Miguel Gascón 2008 Malbec (Mendoza); $14. A bright purple luster draws you in, and the nose is bright, clean, focused and full of wild blackberry. Balanced in the mouth, with size and tannin but plenty of acidity and fruit. Tastes of blackberry, vanilla cream, molasses and spice, and the finish brings it on home. Sincere and excellent for the price. Imported by E & J Gallo.

46

89 Leasingham 2008 Magnus Riesling (Clare Valley); $12. This wine earns every penny of its modest price tag with a bright palate of petrol, talcum powder and wet stones propping up aromas of white flowers, cumin and lime. The finish could be longer but with this stunning nose and palate, we're not complaining. Drink now. Imported by Constellation Wines U.S.

47



89 Odfjell 2008 Armador Carmenère (Maipo Valley); $12. A nice, clean, attractive version of affordable Carmenère? Yep, that's what Odfjell delivers pretty much every year with its Armador bottling. Aromas are floral, minerally and deep, and so is the palate, which is pure, spicy and loaded with blackberry fruit. Smooth on the finish, too. One of Chile's best value-priced Carmenères. Imported by Select Fine Wine.

48

91 Rulo 2007 Syrca Red Wine (Columbia Valley); $15. This wine hits the ground running, with a surging nose of ripe raspberries, cassis, coffee, tobacco and chocolate. Those flavors fall right into line in the mouth, the fruit so bright and fresh you can almost see it. Flavors are focused and penetrating; little details keep emerging throughout a lengthy finish. It's hard to believe this is a $15 wine.

49



88 Santa Alicia 2009 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); $9. A good deal in value-priced Cabernet. Aromas of mocha, chocolate and ripe berry fruit are well molded, and the palate is warm, rich and full of clean, tasty raspberry and plum fruit accented by another dash of mocha. Fruity and thick, and with a natural oak flavor. Imported by Halby Marketing.

50

88 Château Cabezac 2004 Le Petit Arthur (Minervois); $10. There's no shortage of spice in this value Minervois, with strong notes of pepper and garrigue herbs backed by notes of orange rind, red cherry and young raspberry. Medium-light in the mouth with moderate acidity and soft tannins; drink up now. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc.

51

91 Caterina 2008 Willard Family Vineyard Viognier (Yakima Valley); $15. Beautifully concentrated and textural, this Viognier mixes melon, white peach, nectarine and lemon fruit with pleasing minerality. There is none of the burn or bitterness that so often affects Washington Viogniers. This is a really refreshing, palate-cleansing wine.

52

88 Caves Velhas 2007 Serradayres Reserva (Ribatejo); $8. With its spicy black cherry flavors lifted by cranberry juice, this is a wine that has both structure and fresh fruit. The tannins are part of that structure along with acidity, while the toast element adds spice. To drink now. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd.

53

89 Barker's Marque 2009 ranga.ranga Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); $12. Rather flinty on opening, although that subsides somewhat to reveal green, leafy aromas. This is a lighter-bodied Sauvignon Blanc that's refreshingly brisk and dry, raspingly fresh and green, with a crisply acidic, lingering finish. Imported by International Vines, Inc.

54

90 Fantelli 2007 Serie Magno Malbec (Mendoza); $15. Inky, dark, charred and serious, and it only gets better as it opens with air. The palate has a smooth, deep, comfortable feel and the flavors are sweet, fruity, creamy and proper for Malbec. Chocolaty and rich on the finish. A very nice wine made for near-term drinking. Imported by Kensington Distributors Inc.

55

88 Fleur Du Cap 2008 Wooded Chenin Blanc (Western Cape); $10. This Chenin starts with aromas of vanilla, spice and honey, followed by upfront flavors of peaches, honey and spice. Fun but elegant, with a balanced freshness that keeps it clean on the tongue. Pair with creamy cheeses, fruit. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA.

56

89 Vignobles Alain Jaume & Fils 2007 Les Gélinottes (Côtes-du-Ventoux); $13. Full-bodied, creamy and lush in texture, this 50-50 blend of Grenache and Syrah is just right for drinking over the next few years. Black cherry fruit is touched with just enough pepper and anise to keep your interest sip after sip, gently framed by soft tannins on the finish. Great burger wine. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils.

57

90 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Horse Heaven Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Horse Heaven Hills); $15. The 2008 Horse Heaven Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc does not shy away from the grape's natural grassy pungency. Rather, it embraces it, supporting the herbaceous aromas with ripe tree fruit flavors and some sweet spiciness from the portion (about one fifth) that was barrel fermented. A very nice combination of barrel and stainless styles.

58



90 Leaping Lizard 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $15. A very nice Cabernet at a great price for the quality. It's dry and smooth, with rich Napa tannins framing classic Cab flavors of blackberries, black currants, minerals and cedar. Tastes like it costs three times as much.

59

91 Valle da Fonte 2001 Reserva Touriga Nacional (Douro); $15. From pure Touriga Nacional, this is already mature, with earthy overtones coming through to give leather aromas and flavors that are moving into spice, sweet wood and dark coffee. It has a great smooth texture with delicious final acidity. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports.

60

90 Boomtown 2008 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); $13. Stainless steel fermented, this pure varietal is bursting with a tasty fruit bowl mix of apple, pineapple and Meyer lemon. A hint of mint sneaks in, and the acidity brings bracing minerality to the finish.

61



90 MontGras 2008 Quatro (Colchagua Valley); $15. One of the best values in Chilean wine is Quatro, a lusty blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Carmenère and Syrah. The nose is deep and roasted, with aromas of bacon, vanilla, pastry and black fruit. Lush and full in the mouth, with intense blackberry and cassis flavors. A titan at a great price, and ageable over the short term. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Palm Bay International.

PRIORITIES
Of his $25,000 presidential salary in 1801, Thomas Jefferson spent $3,000 on wine.

BENI DI BATASIOLO



A traditional family-owned Italian winery in the heart of Barolo

www.boissetfamilyestates.com

62

90 Château de Valcombe 2005 Prestige (Costières de Nîmes); $15. There's a lot going on in this bargain-priced beauty black olive, earth, leather and coffee mingle on the nose, while the flavors add fruitier notes of black cherry and savory notes of dried spices. It's softly tannic, and long on the finish. Drink now–2015. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports.

63

88 Luigi Bosca 2009 Finca La Linda Viognier (Luján de Cuyo); $11. A nice New World Viognier with peach and apricot aromas that come across as solid and true. The palate has size and balance, while the flavors of peach and apricot properly reflect the bouquet and bring spice into play. Fades with mild heat and bitterness on the finish, which won't be a factor if you're drinking the wine with a salad or grilled seafood. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World.

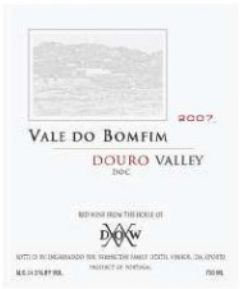
64

90 Te Kairanga 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Martinborough); $15. A super value in Pinot Noir, just so long as you don't expect a bright, berry-scented wine. This is a dark, mysteriously earthy and herbal Pinot, with savory, spicy elements backed by dark fruit and a long, dusty finish. Drink it now and over the next few years. Imported by Liquid Brands LLC.

65

89 Pedro Romero NV Dark, Sweet Moscatel (Jerez); $13. Cinnamon, nutmeg, a pinch of iodine and more spice than fruit on the nose. Flavors of brown sugar and toffee are satisfying, while the feel is fresh with no excess weight. Finishes with caramel, butter, toffee, coffee and pepper. A fit wine that's priced well. Imported by Frontier Wine Imports.

66



89 Dow's 2007 Vale do Bomfim (Douro); $12. There is definite weight behind this intense wine. But it also has ripe, rich, deliciously sweet and juicy black fruits. It has structure as well, a series of sweet tannins and fresh acidity. It's the best red wine from the Dow's Quinta do Bomfim so far. Imported by Premium Port Wines, Inc.

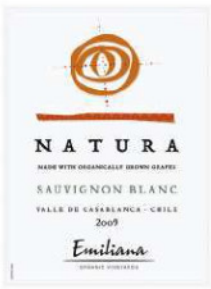
67

90 De Martino 2008 Legado Reserva Chardonnay (Limarí Valley); $15. Composed and showing no overwrought oak or tropical fruit aromas that so often plague Chilean Chardonnay. A smooth operator, with toasty apple and mineral aromas leading to a ripe but cleansing palate and finish. This is like winemaker Marcelo Retamal's favorite child; with proper guidance it is growing better every year. Best overall Chardonnay to date from Limarí. Imported by Opici Import Company.

68

87 Rayun 2008 Syrah (Rapel Valley); $8. If you don't mind a bit of herbal character, this is a nice, easy drinking Syrah with raspberry and cherry aromas and timidity as opposed to a forceful attack. Zesty berry fruit rules the palate, which finishes in round, roasted form. Nice but sort of generic. Imported by Montecastelli Selections.

69

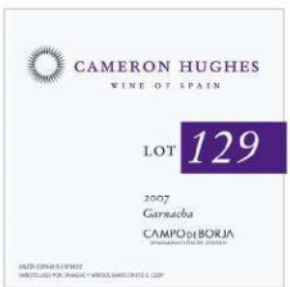


88 Emiliana 2009 Natura Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); $11. Emiliana's Natura is a consistently fresh, clean SB. The nose is mildly green and citrusy, with hints of grass, fresh herbs, orange peel and grapefruit. Mineral, lemon, lime and green apple work the flavor profile, while the finish is chiseled and pure. Clean and crisp throughout. Imported by Banfi Vintners.

70

90 Casa do Valle 2008 Grande Escolha (Vinho Verde); $15. Made to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Casa do Valle winery, this is an impressively rich Vinho Verde. It is smooth, creamy, with green plum and apricot flavors, the acidity a well-balanced counterpoint. Imported by Triage Wines.

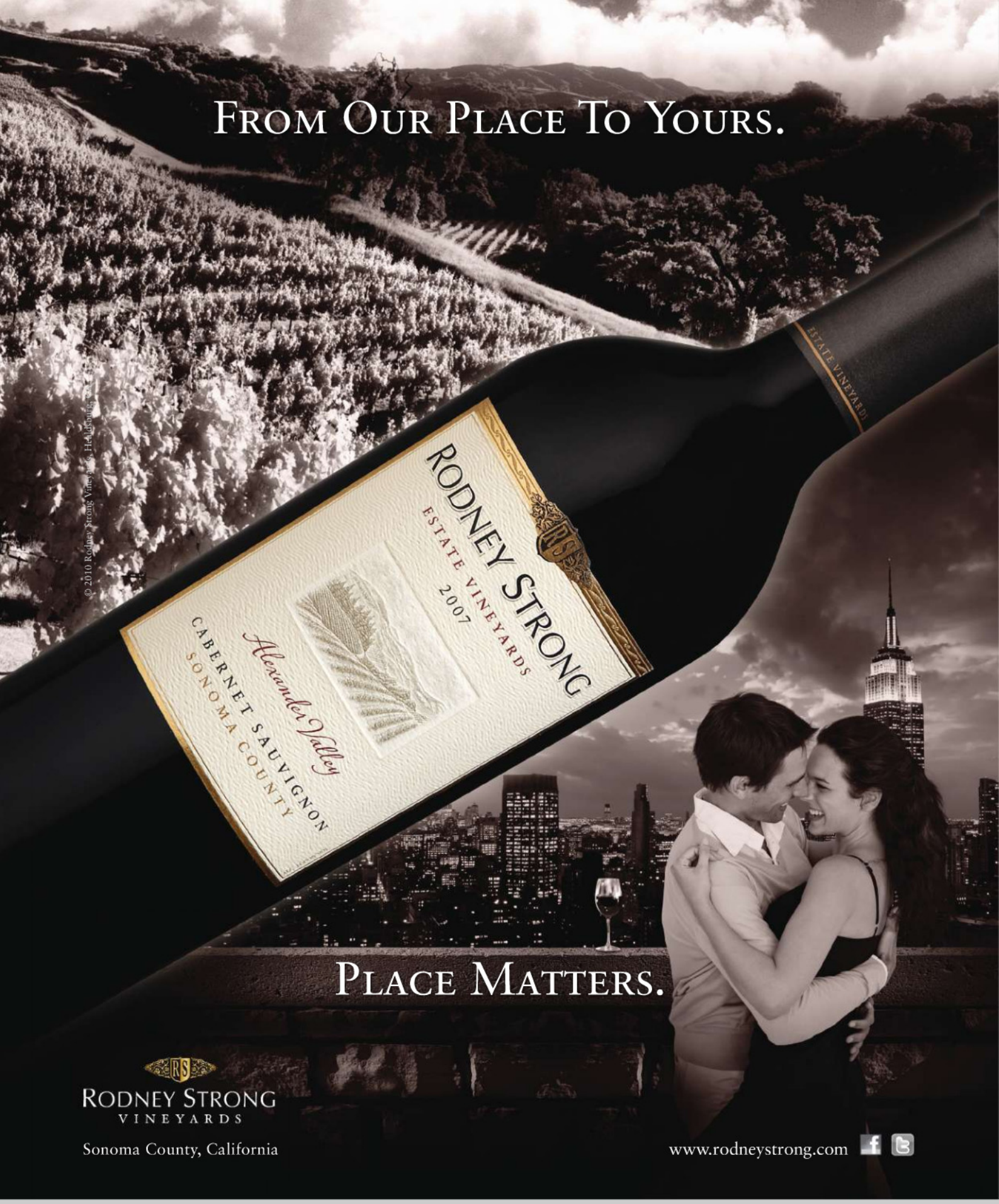
71



90 Cameron Hughes 2007 Lot 129 Garnacha (Campo de Borja); $15. This is nothing more than a few barrels of wine bottled by Hughes, a so-called "global vintner." And like its Lot 128 brother, it is really good juice. Inky and floral, with blueberry and wild raspberry flavors. It's smooth, fresh, bold and finishes with mint and

LIVERMORE, FOREVERMORE

The first American wine to win a French competition hailed not from Napa Valley, but Cresta Blanca Winery in Livermore, some 60 miles southeast. It received the Grand Prix at the 1889 Paris Exposition with its first vintage.


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chocolate. Shows the positives of Campo de Borja's Garnacha. Imported by Cameron Hughes Wine.

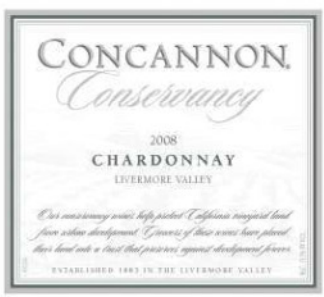
72

87 Snap Dragon 2007 Red (California); $8. Shows lots of rich Zinfandel character in the spiciness, the full-bodied mouthfeel, the sturdy tannins and especially the flavors of wild forest berries, leather and cola. Delicious, and a great bargain.

73

89 Bernard Magrez 2005 Château Haut Mouleyre (Bordeaux); $14. Based in the heart of the Entre-deux-Mers, this vineyard has ancient monastic origins. The 2005 is a well-balanced wine, structured with Cabernet and rounded with Merlot. The fruit is rich, not complex, but very food friendly. Imported by Bernard Magrez USA.

74



90 Concannon 2008 Conservancy Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); $15. A very nice Chardonnay that's dry and crisp and elegant. Shows tart, leesy flavors of citrus fruits, apricots and pears, with a steely minerality that may come from those famous Livermore rocks. Great price for a Chardonnay of this quality.

75

89 Domaine Lafond 2007 Roc Epine (Côtes-du-Rhône); $14. A super value, Lafond's 2007 Côtes-du-Rhône bursts with fruit. Bright, bold waves of black cherries laze across the palate, accented by hints of dried spices and herbs. Drink now–2012. Imported by Wines of France.

76

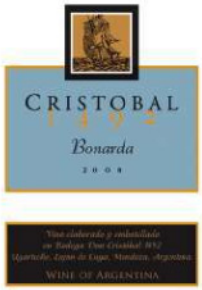
88 Nederburg 2009 The Winemaster's Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); $10. This robust SB starts with a nose of cut grass and gooseberry, followed by a complex, spicy array of tropical fruit and spice. Weighty but balanced, the wine will pair well with more complex seafood dishes: think halibut or tuna. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.

77



88 Douglas Green 2009 Vineyard Creations Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); $10. Vibrant, tart aromas of green gooseberries and lime rind elevate the underlying hay and fresh thyme herbal accents. Lean, barely ripe white peach and hard pear add volume to the medium-weight mouth. Balanced and seamless with a clean, refreshing finish. Drink up! Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.

78



88 Cristobal 1492 2008 Bonarda (Mendoza); $11. A pure, sweet, easygoing, full-bodied red wine with tons of boysenberry, currant and chocolaty aromas and flavors. Dark and saturated in the mouth, with a bouncy palate, youthful but tolerable tannins, and a fudge-infused finish. Shines a positive light on varietal Bonarda. Imported by Eagle Eye Imports.

79

90 Adega Cooperativa do Cartaxo 2006 Bridão Reserva (Ribatejo); $13. Big and rich, this is a round and structured wine. It has great layers of ripe herbs, full black fruits and exotic spice to go over the dry tannins. The final flavors are rich, tarry, juicy as well as powerful. Imported by Wine Enterprises LLC.

80

88 Domaine Sorin 2009 Terra Amata Rosé (Côtes de Provence); $11. Darker in color than many Provence rosés, this caramel-flavored wine has a fine line in ripe berry fruits to go with the smooth, velvet texture. Dry in style, its firm texture is right for food. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA).

LIVING TIME MACHINE

The equatorial divide of the seasons enables an Australian wine to have a six-month lead on a Californian produced that same year. Southern Hemisphere harvests happen in their fall (but our springtime), while northerly grapes grow into the fall (but the springtime of their next vintage).

HEAVENLY



92 POINTS	93 POINTS	91 POINTS
TRIPLE C 2005	CASA REAL 2005	MEDALLA REAL CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2006
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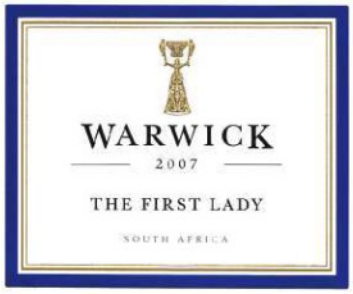
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81



90 Warwick 2007 The First Lady Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape); $15. Aromas of black currant, violet and pepper start this stylish Cabernet and Petit Verdot red from Warwick. On the palate, smooth, round and full-bodied flavors of vanilla, black cherry and cassis are complex but easy drinking. A delicious, chewy spice finish ends the sip. Pair with hearty cuisine like steaks, stews and roasted lamb. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc.

82

88 Domaine Houchart 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); $12. The Domaine Houchart is everything a Provence rosé should be: effusively fresh, vibrantly fruity and dry, dry, dry. With a crisp, mouthwatering palate, it would make a great companion for flavorful fish dishes. Pick this one up to enjoy a bit of the South of France with dinner tonight. Imported by David Milligan Selections.

83

87 Rivarey 2006 Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); $8. Nice for a standard, no-frills type of Rioja. The cherry and raspberry aromas are sweet and clean, while the palate is juicy, fresh and tastes of ripe cherry, berry, vanilla and cream. Offers good clarity, power and depth given its price point. Imported by International Wine Imports.

84



90 Six Prong 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills); $15. Dark, tannic and full-bodied, this five grape Bordeaux blend from a classic Washington vintage is 100% Alder Ridge fruit. This is a fine effort, cellar-ready and substantial. Black fruits, fresh herbs, a hint of tomato leaf, a streak of caramel, all come together but need lots of breathing time (or cellaring) to show their best.

85



88 Hogue 2008 Gewürztraminer (Columbia Valley); $11. This is an off-dry, fruity style, bringing luscious pear, orange, golden apple and citrus flavors to the front. There's a hint of orange marmalade, and it has good weight and concentration, along with lovely purity of flavor, right through the finish. You'll be reaching for that next glass before you know it.

86

90 Side Job 2008 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); $15. One sip is all it takes to love this wine, if you're a Zinfandel fan. It's bone dry, silky in texture and spicy, with brambly, briary flavors of wild forest berries, red currants, tobacco and beef jerky. Feels really rich and savory, right through the long, peppery finish. And look at that price.

87

89 E. Guigal 2008 White (Côtes-du-Rhône); $14. Almost as good as the '07, Guigal pared down the production of this wine by one-third to maintain its quality level. Pear and melon flavors are buttressed by weight and richness while still retaining freshness and a touch of spice on the finish. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc.

88



90 Fitapreta Vinhos 2007 Fitapreta Tinto (Alentejano); $15. A smooth, rounded wine, with depth of black berry, dark plum and licorice flavors. It is solid, chunky, powerfully ripe, full of pepper, spice as well as sweet acidity. Very enticing and rich. Imported by Davis Wine Company.

89

90 Babcock 2009 Identity Crisis Syrah (Santa Barbara County); $15. Identity crisis indeed. The label says Syrah, but the wine is white. Actually, golden copper in color. It's perfectly dry and wonderfully crisp, with complex waves of sour citrus fruit candy, spice and mineral flavors. Fascinating and elusive, it's compelling.

GRAND CRUDE

Prince Charles's prized Aston-Martin burns bioethanol produced from surplus British wine, the result of vintners surpassing European Union-mandated quotas. The "crude" is supplied by a Wiltshire winery and distilled into fuel in Gloucester.

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90

88 Snoqualmie 2008 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); $10. The blend includes 5% Viognier, a nice touch from winemaker Joy Anderson, as it adds both spice and lift to the Chardonnay. Lime, butter and caramel run through the veins of this supremely smooth and soft offering.

91

86 Leone de Castris 2006 Maíana (Salice Salentino); $10. Lighter in concentration and easy-drinking overall, this Salice Salentino (mostly Negroamaro) from southern Italy offers aromas of ripe fruit, prunes, strawberry and black cherry. It has a slightly sweet taste in the mouth and is loaded with mature fruit flavors. Imported by Wine Wave.

92

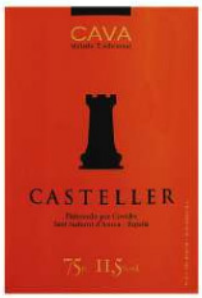
87 Finca del Marquesado 2006 Crianza (Rioja); $10. Composed, balanced and with all the dots connected; this is what we like about basic, affordable Rioja. It's fleshy yet fresh, with snappy cherry and raspberry flavors accented by a wave of vanilla that continues onto the finish. Blends good flavors, weight and acidic crispness. Imported by CIV/USA.

93



87 Henry's Drive Vignerons 2009 Morse Code Chardonnay (Padthaway); $9. This has all the touchstones of good Chardonnay: just enough body and richness, apple, pineapple and melon fruit flavors and a crisp, citrusy finish. Solid Chardonnay for under $10. Imported by Quintessential Wines.

94



88 Casteller NV Brut (Cava); $10. Crisp and nice Cava with good balance, clean apple, dusty spices and pithy lemon. Fold it all together on the nose, palate and finish and you wind up with a well-made, attractive, easy-to-sip bubbly with some polish. Textbook everyday Cava. Imported by Ole Imports.

95



87 Winzer Krems 2009 Pulverturm Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); $9. A delicious, fresh wine, just lightly peppery and featuring the crispest apple texture, so fresh and bright, with an aftertaste that is soft. For drinking now, to keep all that vivid flavor. Screwcap. Imported by Total Wine & More.

96

88 Brancott 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); $13. This vintage of Brancott's Sauvignon Blanc knocks it right down the center of the fairway—clean and refreshing, marked by brisk acids. Stone fruit and melon notes abound, tinged with just the right proportion of green herbs. Drink now. Imported by Pernod Ricard.

97



87 Marqués de Cáceres 2009 Rosé (Rioja); $9. Crisp, natural and lightly salinic on the nose, with medium weight, good freshness and solid peach and citrus flavors. This is a standard but nicely done Rioja rosé with a pithy finish and just the right edge to it. Drink liberally with appetizers and you shouldn't go wrong. Imported by Vineyard Brands.

98

89 Hedges Family Estate 2008 CMS White (Columbia Valley); $14. About three quarters Sauvignon Blanc, with Chardonnay and a splash of Marsanne filling out the blend. A lush effort, with a vivacious mix of pineapple, pear, and green and yellow apples. All stainless fermented, clean and refreshing.

99

88 Weingut Burg Ravensburg 2008 Freiherr von Goeler Dry Riesling (Baden); $13. A lovely and versatile Riesling, filled with lime, floral and apple and pear shadings. This medium-bodied, barely off-dry wine features pristine citrus and tree fruit flavors on the midpalate, then ends on a slightly spicy note. Imported by USA Wine Imports.

100

88 Château de Fontenille 2009 (Entre-Deux-Mers); $12. This is white Bordeaux at its freshest, bursting with herbaceous flavors, very grassy. It does have some weight of green plum flesh and a creamy texture. Delicious. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. WE

A VARIETY OF INDULGENCE



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In an evolving country once known for machismo and heavy handed politics...

Chile's women

winemakers take charge.

BY MICHAEL SCHACHNER

PHOTOS BY MATT WILSON

In 1999, when I took my first trip to Chile, I met with the winemakers from industry-leading bodegas including Santa Rita, Caliterra and Santa Carolina. Their names weren't Rafael or Juan or Guillermo; they were Cecilia, Irene and Pilar. I recall making a mental note of this interesting gender-related fact, but just as quickly I shifted my focus back to learning about the Maipo and Colchagua valleys, the uniqueness of Carmenère, and the still-fresh wounds left over from the tumultuous 1970s and '80s, when Chile was ruled by General Augusto Pinochet and his military henchmen.



From left, Ana Maria Cumsille of Altaïr, Maria Luz Marin of Casa Marin, Cecilia Torres of Santa Rita and Irene Paiva of i Wines at El Mundo del Vino, Santiago, Chile.

A decade later, and with infinitely more knowledge and appreciation of Chile under my belt, it has become clear that a movement that began in the 1970s and '80s, took hold in the '90s, and which has flourished in the 21st century, has reached critical mass: women winemakers' role in Chile is now measurable, vital and a direct reflection of where the country stands both in sociological and political terms.

Today, roughly one in three winemakers in Chile—and by that we mean head winemakers, assistants, apprentices and consultants—are women. And those numbers carry over into the Chilean university system, where approximately one-third of enology students are female. The impact women have had and are having in producing some of Chile's finest and most individual wines is palpable.

> "WHEN I STARTED MAKING WINE THERE WERE VERY FEW WOMEN WORKING IN THE BUSINESS. LOOKING BACK, IT WAS A GOOD TIME TO START; AND ALSO A GOOD TIME TO START OPENING DOORS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION."
> *—Irene Paiva*

With that in mind, *Wine Enthusiast* has chosen to profile four particular Chilean women winemakers who are at the head of their profession. They are a diverse but similar foursome in that they represent two different generations, but are all career winemakers and highly talented. As a group, they have seen their country emerge from a period when Chile was an international pariah to where it now stands: a leader among South American countries on several fronts, not the least among them global wine exporter and New World market driver.

Among the four, Maria Luz Marin, founder of Casa Marin, a Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir specialist located in the coastal San Antonio Valley, is arguably the grande dame of Chilean winemaking. Marin started her winemaking career in 1973 with venerable Viña San Pedro, at a time when there were no other women making wine in Chile. From there she moved through the ranks, ultimately founding her own winery in 2000.

Another trailblazer among the group is Cecilia Torres, who since 1989 has been responsible for making Santa Rita's Casa Real Cabernet Sauvignon, always one of Chile's highest-rated and most sought-after wines.

Slightly younger, and molded more from the post-Pinochet era than their predecessors, are Ana Maria Cumsille, winemaker since 2001 at Altaïr in the Cachapoal Valley, and Irene Paiva, formerly of Caliterra and San Pedro but now a consultant to Santa Ema and a founding member of the Board of Directors of MOVI, a budding association of smaller, independent, mostly artisan wineries throughout Chile. Whereas Cumsille and Paiva had but a few women like Marin, Torres and the now mostly retired Pilar Gonzalez to follow, today's up-and-coming women winemakers like Andrea León of Casa Lapostolle, Cecilia Guzmán of Haras de Pirque, Macarena Morandé of Viña Morandé, Pilar Miranda of Garage Wine Company, and Paula Cárdenas of Matetic Vineyards have a larger selection of women winemakers to look up to.

"Do I feel like we have made a difference? Have we opened up space for women in a business that was once carried only by men? Yes, I feel like we have opened the door to a broader, younger generation of female winemakers," said Torres. "There are so many opportunities for women in the wine profession that did not exist 10 or 20 years ago, and not just in the making of wine. Marketing, viticulture, quality control, etc."

A case in point: Michelle Bachelet, South America's first democratically elected female president, earlier this year finished up her term as president of Chile, during which neighboring Argentina also elected a woman, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, as its president.

"Chile today is a much better place for women," says Torres. "And for that we must thank the men—colleagues, husbands and sons—who are more supportive and better understand the new roles that women are playing throughout society."



Cecilia Torres

winemaker at Viña Santa Rita

in the Maipo Valley with responsibility for Casa Real, one of Chile's benchmark Cabernet Sauvignons

Ask one of Chile's 30-to-40-something women winemakers who they most admire within the industry, and chances are they will say Cecilia Torres, who has since 1989 been the hand behind Santa Rita's world-famous Casa Real Cabernet.

Torres, always quick with a smile, was, in her words, born "many, many years ago along with the first vines of Casa Real." After graduating from the Universidad de Chile, she started her career in the early 1980s at Santa Rita as an assistant winemaker, working for eight years under the renowned Ignacio Recabarren, "my great master at the time." Later, Torres moved to Viña La Rosa and Luis Felipe Edwards before returning to Santa Rita in 1990. And that's where she's been for the past 20 years, making and perfecting the winery's iconic Casa Real.

Fond of visiting Brazil (where one of her



sons lives) and enjoying Carmenère alongside barbecued salmon, her favorite wine and food pairing, Torres believes quality wines with less fanfare, such as Yalumba's The Signature from Australia, Château Kirwan from Margaux and the wines of Fitou in the Languedoc, are what make discovering wine so pleasurable.

As to what traits women possess that might make them equal or better winemakers than men, Torres said women are "patient, dedicated, constant, persevering, and most important of all, we have passion.

"Though I must point out, these characteristics are not exclusive to women," she added. "You also can find them in many men. But where I'm sure we are different is in the holistic vision we have. Men, I find, are better at focusing on one specific task with a single target in mind."

As for how she sees herself: "Definitively as an artist. I'm empathetic, and I really enjoy my job." And does she encounter resistance or gender bias? "Not anymore, although 20 years ago the prejudice was quite strong. Now at this established stage of my career, being a woman winemaker might even be a plus."



Maria Luz Marin

founder of Viña Casa Marin, based in Lo Abarca, San Antonio Valley, a Sauvignon Blanc pacesetter

Born in Santiago in 1949, Marin was Chile's groundbreaker in terms of women winemakers—there were literally none before her. Upon graduating from the University of Chile in 1973, Marin immediately went to work as an apprentice winemaker at San Pedro before leaving the industry during the 1980s to work in Chile's fruit sector. From 1990–95, Marin worked for several wineries, including Bisquertt. She then founded her own company in 1995, which sold bulk wine to the U.K. and Europe. In 2000, she founded Casa Marin, where she has since been joined by her sons Felipe and Nicolás. Her specialties include maritime-influenced Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Syrah.

When asked if there was an individual widely considered to be the "queen" of women winemakers in Chile, Marin said that she is that person. "My inspiration was to be the first. It was a big challenge, and I have always liked challenges. I was the first female winemaker to work for a private winery. I guess you could call me a pioneer."

Casa Marin's Sauvignon Blancs are widely considered to be models for the emerging "coastal style" of Chilean SB; they are crisp, with intense green fruit and saline qualities. These wines, along with the winery's Pinots and Syrahs, aren't overly feminine in style, which suits Marin just fine. "I believe in equality between women and men regarding taste, sense of smell, winemaking preferences. Perhaps women are more perfectionists and pay more attention to the details, but I just try to understand our nature, terroir and vineyards. Nothing in our wines is manipulated or modified."

And does she encounter gender prejudice in Chile or when showcasing her wines outside the country? "Not at all," Marin said. "People are now used to seeing a woman doing all the work inside and outside the winery."



Ana Maria Cumsille

head winemaker at Altaïr, a chateau-modeled wine estate in the Cachapoal Valley that is part of the Viña San Pedro Tarapacá group

Born in Santiago in 1969, Cumsille lives in Chile's capital city with her husband and one-year-old son Diego. But her work life revolves around making the wines Altaïr and Sideral in Cachapoal.

A 1996 graduate of the Universidad Católica's enology program, Cumsille completed her post-grad studies at the University of Bordeaux, where she received her Diplome National d'Oenologie in 1999. She began her career as a cellar worker at Los Vascos and Viña Carmen, and then went back to France to work harvests at Châteaux Margaux and La Louvière. Her final training took place at Franciscan in the Napa Valley, which led to a winemaking job at Indomita in Chile's Casablanca Valley. In 2001 she joined Altaïr, where she has worked ever since.

"I always wanted to work in agronomy because I love the countryside and being outdoors. But with time it became apparent that winemaking was what I loved," explained Cumsille, who credits Frenchman Pascal Chatonnet, Altaïr's chief consultant, for being her mentor.

Caught in between pioneers like Marin and Torres and a new wave of younger women pursuing winemaking, Cumsille said winemaking was always an open option for her. "In Chile, enology is not just linked to men, as is the case with other industries. I don't believe women are better winemakers or wine tasters than men. A good sense of smell, intuition, attention to detail and imagination are qualities you can have being male or female. Fortunately, the mentality of Chileans has evolved; there is no discrimination toward women. Sometimes I think it can be an advantage" to be a woman winemaker.

Cumsille said she was proud when Chile became the first South American nation to elect a woman as president. "It was an example of the role women have in all areas of society, which the wine industry is just a part of. I do think it projected a positive image of our country, and I do believe it has helped in the development and acceptance of Chilean wine in other countries."

She also noted that two-sided cultural changes in Chile have allowed her and other women to become professional winemakers. "There are more educational opportunities, more openness toward women. At the same time, there has been a change among Chilean women. There are more women today that want to work and develop themselves professionally."



Irene Paiva

consultant to wineries including Santa Ema, Vistamar and others, and founder of her own winemaking company, i Wines

When I first met Talca-born Irene Paiva in July 1999, it was winter in Chile, but she was undaunted. Despite a cold drizzle and the fact that she was pregnant with her second child, we climbed up, over and around the outdoor stainless steel tanks at Arboleda in the Colchagua Valley, where she was working at the time. Meanwhile, I thought to myself, "Wow, this woman is tough…maybe tougher than me."

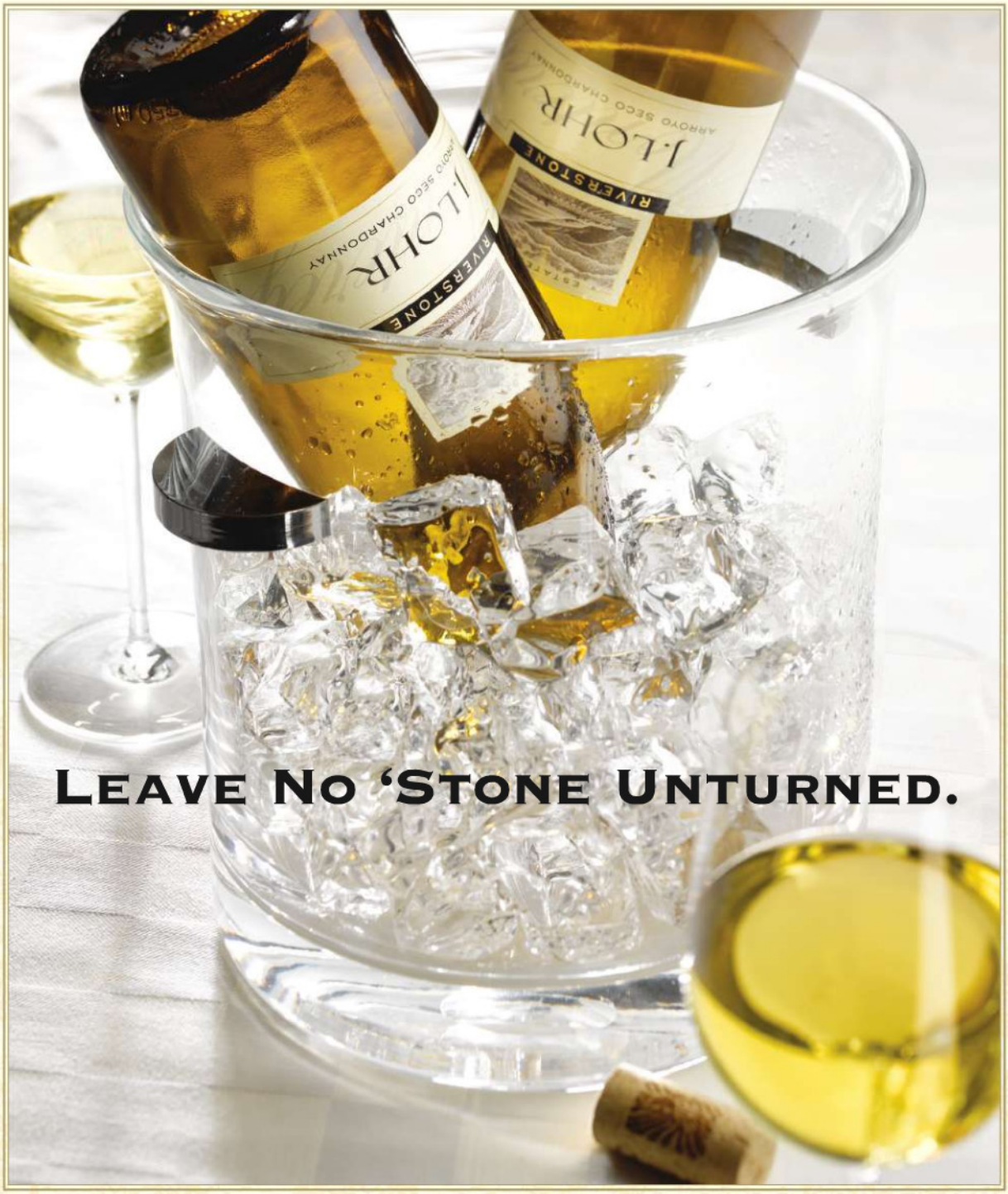
A 1991 graduate of enology from the Catholic University in Santiago and the holder of an MBA from Adolfo Ibañez University, Paiva is still a quintessential country girl. "As the gypsy of our family, I started out thinking about working with animals; cows, horses, etc. I grew up near Talca and I spent a lot of time in the country with my cousins, mostly on my grandfather's farm in Maule. He made wine and maybe that came back to me."

Jump ahead several years and Paiva recalls a seminal moment in her life, one that made her commit to winemaking. "I was working a harvest at Simi in California and I got to spend some time with Zelma Long. One day she invited all the assistants to her house for a barbecue. I still remember a big fireplace in the living room and a beautiful kitchen. It was so warm, and my impression was of a lady who works hard and knows what she wants."

Since then, Paiva has worked at the above-mentioned Arboleda (then part of the Caliterra joint venture between Viña Errazuriz and Robert Mondavi) as well as at San Pedro and Viña Tabalí. In 2005 she was selected as one of Chile's top 100 women leaders and was profiled in a book called *24/24*, which recounted 24 hours in the lives of 24 Chilean career women.

In 2007 she created her own winemaking and consulting firm called i Wines, and just last year she joined the Board of Directors at the Santa Ema winery as well as MOVI, the upstart Movement of Independent Vintners.

"When I started making wine there were very few women working in the business," said Paiva. "But keep in mind that it was a much smaller industry that was just opening up to the world in every way: exporting, traveling to foreign markets, receiving visitors, etc. We were operating with less resources, less research, less organization, less technology, less everything. Looking back, it was a good time to start; and also a good time to start opening doors for the next generation." WE



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Posh Pinot Grigio

—Italy and Beyond

Though it is most closely associated with Italy, and with easy-drinking simplicity, the variety sometimes known as Pinot Gris is capable of complexity and depth. Here's where to look for a more polished Pinot Grigio experience.

Thanks to its sheer drinkability, it's easy to look at Pinot Grigio as a metaphor for the evolving wine culture of the United States and, being among our most popular imported wines, as the engine that drives wine lovers from simple to sophisticated choices: a Pinot Grigio today may lead to a Premier Cru tomorrow.

Truth is, Pinot Grigio (aka Pinot Gris) already has a sophisticated side. It can deliver much more than the highly quaffable, lemonade-like characteristics that earned it blockbuster billing. This cleverly adaptable protagonist is capable of meditative, refined and mature performances. It's time to rethink P.G.

But first, let's look back. The Italians are credited with the modern-day import success of Pinot Grigio. The crisp white wines of Santa Margherita, Cavit, Zonin and many others have washed over American palates for decades, winning our affections and directing us towards dry, unoaked whites. Because so much Pinot Grigio is exported and indeed specifically tailor-made for the U.S., it is often regarded as the most popular Italian wine not found in Italy.

"That's not entirely true," says Brian Larky of Dalla Terra Winery Direct, an importer of many Italian wines, based in Napa, California. "Italians have been drinking wonderful Pinot Grigio for years in areas of northern Italy where the grape is traditionally grown. They didn't just jump on the bandwagon.

"It continues to be a strong category in the U.S. because Pinot Grigio represents everything we love about Italy: lifestyle, beauty, people and food," adds Larky. "Most of all, we love that it is rarely a disappointment."

Here is a profile of Pinot Grigio in Italy and Pinot Grigio/Gris elsewhere in the world, where it is fully capable of showing a distinctly sophisticated side.

—Monica Larner

Italy

Pinot Grigio is a delicate but resilient grape that often reflects elements of the territory surrounding it. In Alto Adige, the mountainous far north of Italy, cooler climates and steep vineyard inclines create aromatic expressions with accents of peach blossom, pink grapefruit and drying mineral. A few excellent producers to look out for are Alois Lageder, Colterenzio, Elena Walch as well as the cooperative wineries St. Pauls, Cantina Caldaro and San Michele Eppan.

In the Friuli region, however, where temperatures are slightly warmer and soils are alluvial, the wines can show rich, creamy density, loads of ripe fruit and apricot, as well as natural touches of vanilla and almond. These wines are truly unforgettable and represent some of the best white wines made in the country: Marco Felluga, Livio Felluga, Ronco del Gelso, Jermann, Plozner and Mario Schiopetto are a few names to look out for.

"Pinot Grigio is a very sensitive grape," says winemaker Fabrizio Gatto, who makes Maso Canali and Ecco Domani Pinot Grigio (two brands of E&J Gallo). "It is only possible to grow good grapes on hillsides and in very windy areas."

The uniquely grey-colored variety also reacts well to winemaking techniques like late harvests for more concentrated flavors and aromas, oak aging for nutty toasty accents, extended contact with the lees for rich density and texture or extended contact with the skins for a more saturated color. In fact, Pinot Grigio was traditionally made in a *ramato* ("copperish") style that exhibits tones similar to a rosé only with more amber and orange highlights. The color is obtained by allowing the wine to absorb those pigments



PHOTOS JON VAN GORDER

from the skins; decades ago (before temperature control and stainless steel), most Italian Pinot Grigios exhibited a *ramato* color. Now, these wines have returned to fashion: Tommasi and Attems are two producers that make them. —M.L.

91 Marco Felluga 2007 Mongris Riserva Pinot Grigio (Collio); $30. Here's a gorgeous Riserva expression of Pinot Grigio with a creamy, dense mouthfeel and prominent aromas of peach cream, apricot, almond paste and honey. Those yellow fruit flavors last long on the palate and would pair with shellfish or white meat. Very nice. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct.

90 St. Pauls 2009 Egg Leiten Exclusiv Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $24. This bright and sophisticated Pinot Grigio offers unique richness and complexity of aromas. The wine is creamy and generous on the palate and would pair well with shellfish or creamy shrimp risotto. Imported by Tesori Wines.

90 Ronco del Gelso 2008 Sot Lis Rivis Pinot Grigio Friuli Isonzo; $24. The 2008 vintage has produced a beautiful edition of this elegantly oak-aged Pinot Grigio. This is a refined and elegant wine that shows excellent fruit and careful winery work. It's fragrant and creamy with aromas of apricot, citrus, white almond and honey. Imported by Panebianco.



Alsace

Rich, luscious, full-bodied, yet always with good acidity, Alsace Pinot Gris is the complete opposite of Pinot Grigio. Many Alsace winemakers regard this as the classic Alsace variety, even above Riesling.

And no wonder. Superb Pinot Gris seems to come effortlessly from the best producers in the region. It makes wines that range from dry through levels of sweetness to the great Vendanges Tardives (late harvest) wines that seem to happen in most years. Some producers love to bring out extreme opulence, while others want to restrain the variety's natural exuberance to keep some acidity. But expect Pinot Gris, even balanced Pinot Gris, to be in the region of 14% or even 15% ABV.

Ten years ago, if you had asked an Alsace wine lover to name this grape, it would have been called Tokay-Pinot Gris. Ten years earlier, before Hungary's entry into the European Union, it would have been called Tokay d'Alsace. The only link between the Pinot Gris' of Hungary and Alsace is two generals—one who took the grape from Alsace to Hungary in the 14th century, and another who brought it back in the 16th, by which time it had stopped being called Grauklevner and become Tokay, but was always Pinot Gris. Confused? So are old-time Alsatians, who stubbornly cling to Tokay d'Alsace.

Pairing Pinot Gris with food can be tough. "I think it is problematic because there are so many different styles," says Daniel Johnnes, a wine importer and wine director of Daniel Boulud's Dinex Group of restaurants in New York. Johnnes imports Alsace wine from Domaine Mittnacht. "You have to be careful with the richness," he says. "Personally I believe in matching intensity with intensity, so I'd pair Pinot Gris with poultry, with rich fish such as swordfish, with cream sauces. It is certainly not an apéritif wine." —Roger Voss

94 Domaine Weinbach 2008 Altenbourg Pinot Gris $48. Rich, sweet wine that is in character a Vendange Tardive. It is gorgeous and opulent while so balanced and elegant. The acidity is a wonderful contrast to the smoky honey and orange zest flavors. A hint of bitterness suggests, for sure, that this will be even more wonderful when aged. ***Cellar Selection.*** Imported by Vineyard Brands.

92 Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Kitterlé Grand Cru Le Brise Mollets Pinot Gris $46. Sweet and rich wine, preserving some exciting acidity. That makes the currant and fig flavors well in balance with a smoky character, touched by toast. A very elegant wine that also projects concentration. Imported by Maisons Marques et Domaines.

92 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Herrenweg de Turckheim Pinot Gris $50. An astonishing nose of peach and bramble with refreshing accents of lemon zest. The intense, off-dry palate of pistachio, pecan and apricot lead to a long, minerally finish. Carries its hefty 15.5% alcohol well. Best now to 2016. Imported by The Sorting Table.

Australia & New Zealand



Pinot Grigio remains trendy Down Under. In New Zealand, plantings of it continue to build, following on a decade-long surge. In Australia, there's enough of it—and enough demand—that megaproducer Casella Wines (makers of Yellow Tail) has gotten in on the act. But this being the other side of the planet, there are a few twists in the Pinot Grigio story.

In New Zealand, the domestic product is almost always referred to as Pinot Gris. And while 10 years ago, when the Pinot Gris class was first introduced at the prestigious Air New Zealand Wine Awards, styles were all over the map, now New Zealand Pinot Gris is settling into a more predictable mold: "The most common style fits somewhere in between Italian Pinot Grigio and Pinot Gris from Alsace," explains Clive Jones, winemaker for Nautilus Estate. "It is dry—less than seven grams per liter residual sugar—and retains some of the crispness of Grigio but also has some of the weight and texture more aligned with Alsace."

At Spy Valley Wines, winemaker Paul Bourgeois aims for a rich, textured style, which he correlates with low cropping levels and old vines. "Old oak fermentation and malolactic fermentation have also been important to further refine texture," says Bourgeois.

In Australia, there's a wider range of styles, which recently spurred an effort by the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) to develop the PinotG Style Spectrum. Based on a wine's spectrographic analysis, it is classified somewhere between "crisp" and "luscious." The idea is to help guide consumers towards their own preferred styles.

Perhaps because of Australia's generally warm climates, the overall quality of the wines has been less exciting than those from New Zealand. Still, some of the cooler regions show promise, such as the Adelaide Hills and Tasmania. The biggest obstacle to enjoying those wines is the relatively limited availability here in the United States. —Joe Czerwinski

90 Dry River 2008 Pinot Gris (Martinborough); $55. Made in Dry River's hallmark Pinot Gris style of ripeness and lush fruit, this is a broad, fairly sweet wine that suggests honey, ripe melon and peach. The richness on the palate shows ample concentration, while the finish lingers, long and sweet, hinting at cinnamon and clove. 15 cases imported. Imported by RO Imports LLC.

◀ **90 Lawson's Dry Hills 2008 Pinot Gris (Marlborough); $19.** With only 6.5 g/l of residual sugar, this weighty wine comes across as almost dry, allowing the emphasis to be on the bold notes of melon, pear and citrus. It's rich without being overtly sweet, then finishes clean, adding a touch of white pepper to the mix. Drink now–2012. Imported by The Country Vintner. ***Editors' Choice.***

◀◀ **88 Innocent Bystander 2009 Pinot Gris (Victoria); $15.** Marked by modest apple and pear fruit on the nose, this is a fairly richly textured but dry example of Pinot Gris. It's not the most complex wine, but it fills the mouth with ripe tree fruits and a slightly warm finish. Drink now. 500 cases imported. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars.

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California

Most California-made Pinot Grigio/Gris display fresh, natural acidity and juicy citrus, pear, melon, apple and floral flavors. When properly priced—say, under $12—the wine can be a fine alternative to Sauvignon Blanc. In fact, you'll find lots of "Best Buys" in *Wine Enthusiast*'s database of wine reviews over the years, for such brands as White Truck, Mirassou, J and Babcock. These are wines that are widely available, and can be enjoyed as cocktail sippers with small plates of appetizers, or with spicy Asian fare.

Most of the inexpensive bottlings are unoaked and are called Pinot Grigio. For consumers looking for something more full-bodied and complex, a relatively small number of vintners are making wines in the full Burgundian style. These generally are barrel fermented and/or aged, stirred on the lees, and sometimes subject to malolactic fermentation. The unofficial practice is to call these more elaborate wines Pinot Gris. However, not all Pinot Gris have been wood aged, and some of the best P.G.'s never saw the inside of a barrel.

John Lancaster, the sommelier at San Francisco's popular restaurant Boulevard, likes to serve a full-bodied, but not necessarily oaked, Pinot Gris as an alternative to a big Chardonnay. "It treads a fine line between richness and acidity, with lots of flavor and texture," he explains. "There's a lot of wine in the glass, but it doesn't go over the top." Pinot Gris usually has the benefits of being lower in alcohol and less expensive than Chardonnay. —Steve Heimoff

91 Carr 2009 Turner Vineyard Pinot Gris (Sta. Rita Hills); $20. Racy in acidity, this unoaked wine was bottled early to preserve fresh fruitiness. It's super-clean and dry in the mouth, with fine, delicate flavors of citrus fruits, apricots, white peaches, green apples and a touch of honeysuckle and stony minerals. A brilliantly racy wine that needs no wood to be opulent and compelling.

90 J Vineyards & Winery 2009 Pinot Gris (California); $15. With no oak or malolactic fermentation, this wine is all pure, savory fruit. Made from a combination of Clarksburg, in the Delta, and Monterey fruit, it combines warm climate ripeness with coastal acidity to produce a crisp wine with intricate lime and spice flavors. ***Best Buy.***

◀ **90 Etude 2009 Pinot Gris (Carneros); $24.** Unoaked. A beautiful Pinot Gris that defines the drier, more elegant style in California. This 2009 is entirely consistent with past vintages from Etude, which have been superior. Shows Meyer lemon, lime, vanilla and peppery spice flavors, with a long, distinguished finish. Etude hasn't raised the price in many years.

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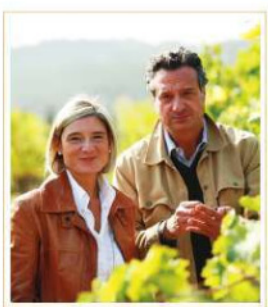
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Washington & Oregon

Pinot Gris/Grigio was introduced to the Pacific Northwest by the late David Lett, founder of the Eyrie Vineyards. In an interview with me some years ago, he recalled that he'd "brought Pinot Gris up to Oregon with me in 1964—160 cuttings taken from the only four vines they had at UC Davis." They fit his theory—radical for the day—that by planting early ripening varieties in the Willamette Valley, he could work through Oregon's cool growing season. "The idea was to adapt the grapes to the climate," he noted, adding (with characteristic irony) "which they still haven't figured out in places like Santa Barbara!"

Though Lett's 1970 Eyrie Pinot Gris staked a claim to being the first commercial version made in America, for the next decade it remained one man's odd obsession. Ten years after that first vintage, Eyrie's annual Pinot Gris production totaled just 25 cases. In 1990 there were only 104 acres harvested in all of Oregon. But in the 1990s, propelled by an international reputation for their Pinot Noirs, Oregon vintners turned in earnest to Pinot Gris as their signature white wine. Today, Pinot Gris is the second most widely planted grape in the state, with almost 3,000 acres under cultivation.

Early versions were made as rich, buttery, oaky wines, highly imitative of Chardonnay, but they have evolved into more contemporary styles. Today, Oregon's Pinot Gris are mostly kept away from new oak, made with an emphasis on fruit flavors of fresh pears, supported with juicy natural acidity.

Washington is a relative latecomer to any significant production of the grape, though in the past few years it has jumped up to fifth place among all white grapes grown here. Demand is high, and only Viognier commands a higher average price per ton. Though not as concentrated or fleshy as many Oregon bottlings, Washington versions are also lively, fruit-forward wines, showing a zesty mix of tart green apple and Japanese pear flavors. —Paul Gregutt

◀ **91 Adelsheim 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); $19.** Here is another fine success for Adelsheim, a founding Oregon winery currently on a quality roll. Elegant and crisply defined, this textbook Pinot Gris begins with a mix of fresh pear, honeydew melon and gooseberry, then refreshes the palate with juicy acids and some light citrus skin flavors.

◀◀ **90 Willow Crest 2009 Pinot Gris (Yakima Valley); $10.** Estate-grown from some of the oldest Pinot Gris vines in Washington, this Yakima Valley bottling highlights fresh herbs and sharp, juicy pear and apple fruit flavors. The vivid fruit is racy and tightly defined, and seems to gather strength and focus as it sits in the mouth. A splendid effort that really sets the standard for Washington Pinot Gris. ***Best Buy.***

89 Rex Hill 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); $16. This is a beautifully rendered, light and detailed Oregon Pinot Gris, redolent of scents of spring flowers and citrus peel, and flavored with an elegant blend of pineapple, Asian pear, jicama and white pepper. Very fresh and spicy. HT

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER

FOR FULL REVIEWS OF PINOT GRIGIOS FROM THE REGIONS IN THIS ARTICLE AND ELSEWHERE, GO TO winemag.com/buyingguide

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Portugal's NEW AGE OF DISCOVERY

IF YOU THINK THE DOURO IS ALL ABOUT PORT WINES, THINK AGAIN—WINEMAKERS HERE ARE CRAFTING COMPLEX AND DELICIOUS TABLE WINES AT ALL PRICE POINTS.

BY ROGER VOSS



PHOTO: MICK. ROCK/CEPHAS

The Portuguese have always been explorers. They sailed the oceans before any other Europeans, moving around the world long before Columbus reached the Americas. Now the Douro winemakers are making discoveries vineyard-by-vineyard and vintage-by-vintage about their own region.

In the late 1990s, sales of Port were so flat that winemakers turned to crafting table wines from the historic mountainous schist vineyards. Thus began a process of rediscovery, for both winemakers and consumers: Douro table wines are an exciting, exhilarating work in progress. That may seem strange for a wine region that has been producing Port for hundreds of years. But right now, nothing is fixed, nothing decided, nothing determined. And so much is delicious, it's amazing.





Sophie Bergqvist of Quinta de la Rosa believes that lessons learned in making table wines can improve Port winemaking, and vice versa. Harvested grapes in traditional baskets near Pinho in the Douro Valley.

PHOTOS TOP PIERRE MOSCA/CEPHAS; MICK ROCK/CEPHAS

Opening up their world of fortified wines to include the crafting of table wines was a natural progression but it wasn't easy. "We started making big, fruity, high-alcohol, New World wines. Some early wines were too tannic," agreed Sophia Bergqvist of Quinta de la Rosa, a second-generation Port producer. "There has been a change in style and an evolution in drinkability. Now, the Douro is a serious wine region."

With the changes, exciting wines come in all styles and many price points. There are the powerful, single-estate, single-vineyard wines, world-class in their complexity, selling for $50 and up. There are elegant, wood-aged wines, packed with fruit and tannins that can age well, often great values at around $30. And, increasingly, there are fresh and fruity wines, easy to drink, soft and approachable, whose prices can be as value driven as $10. Add to these an increasing range of quality whites and rosés and the Douro's range must surely be seen as impressive.

This year, I have tasted exciting wines from many properties new to the export market, and two other things struck me as new. One is the increase in inexpensive brands from the larger shippers. Sogevinus, with its table wines from Kopke, Burmester as well as under its own name, is one. Real Companhia Velha's table wine offering has deepened in quality thanks to the several years Napa winemaker Jerry Luper was in charge. These firms have joined the established table wine ranges from Sogrape's Ferreira brand (inexpensive Esteva up to Barca Velha) and from Ramos-Pinto.

The other is the increasing importance of the Douro Superior. This plateau region at the eastern end of the Douro, close to Spain, is flatter than the central vineyard heartland of Cima Corgo with its gorge-like valleys, and is therefore easier to farm because it allows for mechanization, whereas so much of core Douro vineyard work is done by hand.

Quibbles and queries

Today, the Douro is a fascinating place to be. Winemakers whose fortified wines are already packed with wild, delicious flavors are learning how to cajole the hard schist soil into giving great fruit for table wines. Wherever these winemakers gather, strong opinions are voiced on the best vineyards and most suitable grapes for table wines as well as the best methods to vinify the fruit.

Should table wine come from the same vineyards as Port? It depends who you talk to. "Producers will say that a good vineyard for Port is the same as a good vineyard for table wine," says Luís Seabra, winemaker at esteemed Niepoort, one of the first to put its table wine into international production. "But we believe in cooler vineyards for table wine." He is on the side of those who say you need higher altitude vineyards, maybe north-facing vineyards.

Sandra Tavares da Silva of Wine & Soul, based in Vale de Mendiz, speaks for another contingent: "We really believe that if fruit is good for

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a vintage Port, then it is excellent for top red wines. You need to work them differently."

Less heated is the debate about varieties, simply because most of the new generation of Douro table wines are blended. It has always been the Port way and, with few exceptions, these new winemakers are staying true to that approach. The older vineyards are still a wild mix of the 50 or so varieties that have been planted in the past, and producers are taking advantage of these by producing field blends. When harvested separately and blended in the winery, the Douro's wealth of grape varieties lends precision to the final wine.

Which grapes will predominate in the blends? Early on, Tinta Roriz was seen as the grape for table wines. After all, it produced the great Tempranillo-based wines of Ribera del Duero upriver on the Spanish plateau. But in the Douro, Tinta Roriz is too vigorous and needs serious green harvesting. So now, floral, velvet-textured Touriga Franca is "the all-round grape for Douro table wines," says Rupert Symington of Symington Family Estates, producers of Dow's, Graham's and Warre's Ports. Touriga Nacional, the star grape of Portugal, "needs to be blended," he believes.

At Sogrape's Quinta do Seixo, winemaker Luís Sottomayor is testing Touriga Fermea, Dontelinho and Touriga Francisca. "We chose them because we believe they will add even more complexity to blends," he says.

Another contingent of producers swear by the juicy, dark-colored Sousão or spicy Tinta Amarela. But regardless of the lead variety, you're not likely to find many single-varietal wines, at least not in the near future. There are some (generally with Touriga Nacional) but they are never as successful, or as complete, as blends.

The debates do not end in the winery. The Douro's famed open granite lagars, still used to make top Ports, are favored by some for table wines. Others prefer stainless steel or large wood fermentation tanks. Some producers will use both, depending on the style of wine they want to make.

Lessons flow both ways. "Table wine making is much more demanding than Port making," says Bergqvist. "We have had to learn how to harvest for table wines—pruning, controlling yields, canopy management. It is more expensive, but what we are learning with table wine can now feed back to improve the quality of Port."



João Nicolau de Almeida, chairman and winemaker, outside the house of Ramos Pinto in Vila, has always been eager to follow in his father's footsteps, crafting dry red wines.

What's old is new again

Despite the recent boom and the steep learning curve, table wine is not exactly new to the Douro. In fact, the first Ports were dry table wines, exported to England during its war with France when the country could no longer rely on its supply of Bordeaux. "The sweeter wine style started with the 1820 vintage," says João Nicolau de Almeida, head of Port and table wine producer Ramos-Pinto. "The year was so good, the yeasts were killed by the sugar, leaving a natural sweet wine that was a big success in England."

From then on, despite some resistance by Baron Forrester, a major Port figure in the mid-19th century, Port was sweet. The big shipping firms wanted sweet and, of course, they won. Dry red wines disappeared from the commercial export market for over a century.

It was de Almeida's father who began a revival of red wines. In 1952, Fernando Nicolau de Almeida, working at Port shipper Ferreira, made the first vintage of Barca Velha, using grapes from the vineyard of Quinta do Vale Meão, high up the Douro in the region now known as Douro Superior. His choice of vineyard was inspired. With Barca Velha, Fernando Nicolau de Almeida showed what could be done—and created a

PHOTO PIERRE MOSCA/CEPHAS

A DOURO DOZEN

A selection of wines that display the best from the Douro at all price points.

95 Quinta do Crasto 2007 Vinha Maria Teresa (Douro); $125. Imported by Broadbent Selections
95 Casa Ferreirinha 2001 Reserva Especial (Douro); $75. Imported by Broadbent Selections
94 José Maria da Fonseca 2007 Domini Plus (Douro); $40. Imported by Palm Bay International
93 Quinta de São José 2008 Reserva (Douro); $40. Imported by Laurel Importers
93 Niepoort 2008 Redoma Reserva White (Douro); $NA. Imported by Polaner Selections
92 Wine & Soul 2007 Pintas (Douro); $NA. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines
90 Apegadas Quinta Velha 2007 (Douro); $20. Imported by The Artisan Collection
90 Quinta de la Rosa 2008 (Douro); $20. Imported by Vinum Wine Importing
89 Dow's 2007 Vale do Bomfim (Douro); $12. Imported by Premium Port Wines
88 Quevedo 2008 Oscar's (Douro); $12. Imported by P.R. Grisley
88 Quinta do Vallado 2008 Vallado Tinto (Douro); $19. Imported by Quintessential Wines
86 Quinta do Ventozelo 2008 Vinzelo Tinto (Douro); $9. Imported by Signature Imports

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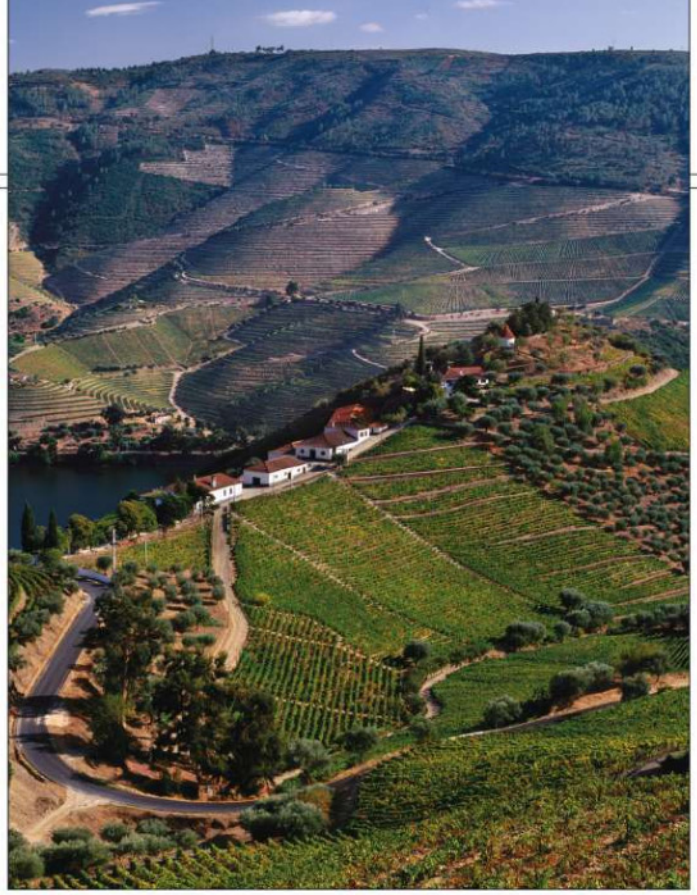
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Left, Quinta do Crasto, on the slopes above the Douro River. Above, Luís Sottomayor of Sogrape's Quinta do Seixo fine-tunes a blend.

legend: the wine is made only in the very best vintages. (The latest release was the 2000 vintage). Still under the control of the Olazabal family, descendants of the quinta's 19th century creator Doña Antonia Ferreira, Vale Meão continues to produce deeply impressive table wines as well as Ports.

But why did it take so long? As João Nicolau de Almeida explains: "Nobody else made red wine because of the control problems in the heat of the Douro." Until, that is, refrigeration arrived to control fermentation, enabling de Almeida and Ramos-Pinto to launch the first vintage of Duas Quintas (two estates) in 1990. "I really wanted to follow my father in making red wine," says João. The following year, he introduced a Duas Quintas Reserva.

A tasting of Duas Quintas Reserva from 1991, organized for me by de Almeida at Quinta do Bom Retiro, revealed wines that can age impressively well, some (the 1992) still very fresh, others (1994, 1997) impressive, powerful; the 2001 magnificent.

Close to the land

Slowly, other Port producers followed in making table wines worthy of their stellar names. Dirk Niepoort produced his first vintage of Redoma in 1991. But, as Seabra explains, "until the end of the 1990s, our wines were traditional and rustic in style. Only from 2000 did we see changes all over the place, with more and more elegance."

"1999 and 2000 were the watershed years, when the existing producers changed their business model," says Symington. Symington, the largest Port producer, is now well into a table wine program with Altano and Vale do Bomfim as well as the joint venture Chryseia (with French consultant Bruno Prats formerly of Cos d'Estournel) launched in 2000.

What started out as a way of increasing sales in the face of a static Port market has taken on a life of its own. Like Symington, Quinta do Crasto's Roquette family joined with another Bordelais, Jean-Michel Cazes, to create Xisto. Domini and Domini Plus are produced in the Douro by Domingos Soares Franco of J.M. da Fonseca in the Setúbal peninsula near Lisbon. Dão producer Dão Sul now has a Douro wine, Quinta das Tecedeiras.

The movement has inspired many Douro producers to expand to table wines from their small Port base and the sale of grapes to larger shippers, including Quinta do Passadouro, Quinta do Portal and Quinta do Vallado. Others started with table wines and only afterwards moved to Port—we can cite Apegadas Quinta Velha and Conceito. Some, like Cristiano van Zeller at Quinta Vale Dona Maria, are resurrecting vineyards that had been neglected. Their wines range from some of the greatest in the Douro to quality yet inexpensive labels. For many, table wine is now the larger part of the business.

And so the transformation of the Douro continues. Though the languishing Port business and experimentation in the vineyard were the initial drivers, another facet of the movement is what is inspiring the region and will further the momentum: increasingly, wine is being made by people who actually live there.

Gone are the days when shippers came by boat, train or four hours by car from Oporto just for the harvest. With faster communications and better roads, the younger generation is living in the Douro. Jorge Serrôdio Borges and Sandra Tavares da Silva at Passadouro and Wine & Soul; Jorge Moreira and Olga Martins at de la Rosa, Lavradores de Feitoria and Poeira; Mateus Nicolau de Almeida, the son of João, at Muxagat, may travel as much as anybody in wine. But for him and others, home is the wildly beautiful, spectacular scenery of the Douro. Like all good winemakers, they are close to the land.

PHOTOS MICK ROCK/CEPHAS

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The Flavors of Autumn

Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom, clove, cumin—though they're associated with simplicity, home and hearth, these flavors can help create dishes of remarkable sophistication.

BY MICHELE ANNA JORDAN

November scents and flavors are special; they have to be in order to help us forget summer's sweet aroma of basil warmed by the sun. In November, it's wood smoke, toasty spices and the glow of candles on the holiday table. The foods that most please us now are luscious, rich and redolent with herbs and spices like cinnamon, clove, ginger, nutmeg and sage, flavors that converge in holiday feasts but that please us throughout the season.

Although we enjoy many of the same wines that quenched our thirst around the pool, the flavors of fall accent subtle qualities that we may not have noticed in the heat of August. An Anderson Valley Gewürztraminer, for example, may seem bright and floral alongside a peach salad, but when it is served with winter squash, its spicy notes blossom.

What is it about spices that make them so welcome now? Anyone who eats seasonally—shopping mostly at farmers markets, for example, and avoiding fresh produce from the southern hemisphere—understands. It is the wisdom of nature, beckoning us to pay attention. Spices are long-lived, as are the foods of fall and winter. Of course they go together, just as the fleeting foods of summer flatter each other. Spices, by definition, are warm as well, and comfort us from the inside when we need it most, offering a hedge against the chill and, in some visceral way, the season's darkness.

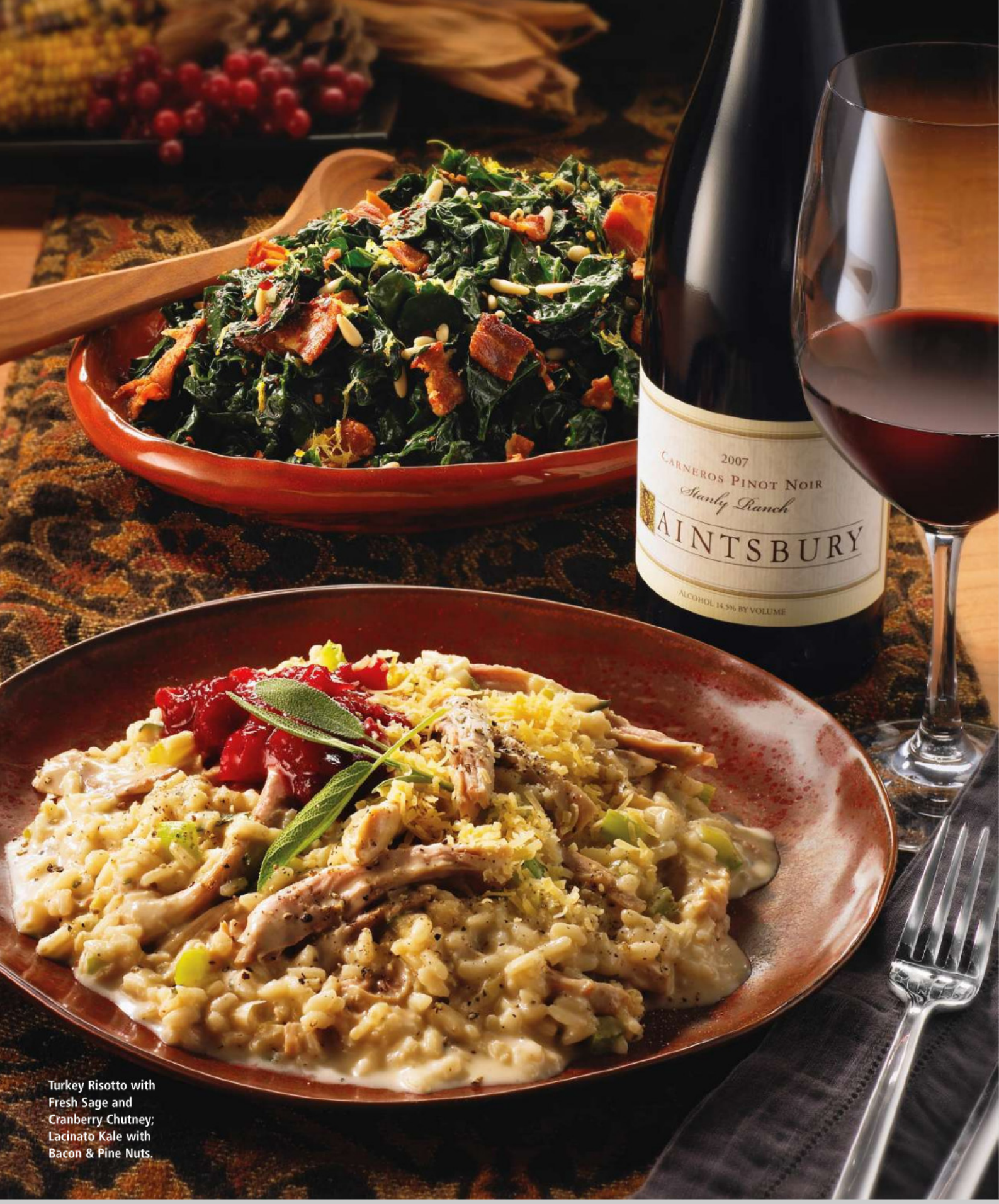
The spice pantry

Fall is an excellent time to restock spices and herbs. Most of us have ancient tins and jars shoved to the back of the spice cupboard and ignored for years, sometimes decades. It is good to cull these relics.

Common wisdom recommends that all spices be discarded after six months but this is neither practical nor necessary. Many spices retain their flavors nearly indefinitely; black peppercorns, for example, deteriorate only after the outer black mantle has been cracked, which is why it is always best to buy whole rather than ground peppercorns. Star anise, cardamom, clove, cumin, caraway, coriander, allspice berries, nutmeg and cinnamon retain their flavors until they are crushed or ground, as long as they are kept away from heat



PHOTO JON VAN GORDER



Turkey Risotto with Fresh Sage and Cranberry Chutney; Lacinato Kale with Bacon & Pine Nuts.

and light.

Dried herbs, on the other hand, begin to lose their flavors almost immediately, no matter how they are stored. Sage, the season's signature herb, is the most fragile and should always be replaced at this time of year. Rubbed sage, which contributes truer flavor than ground sage, should be stored in the refrigerator, as should dried sage leaves. Other dried herbs—thyme, oregano, marjoram, basil and such—should be replaced annually and stored in a cool, dark cupboard.

It is important to understand that a dried herb is not a substitute for fresh leaves. Dried herbs contribute different flavors than their fresh counterparts and some dishes, including many of the season, benefit from both. Others, especially the rich stews of Cajun cuisine, rely on the particular qualities of dried herbs for their signature flavors. Some herbs—parsley, chives and cilantro, especially—do not retain flavor during the drying process.

A fall feast

When crafting a fall menu, even a casual weeknight dinner, paying attention to the flavors of the season will produce richly satisfying results with less effort than you might imagine. From hot mulled wine to pumpkin pie, sweet spices shape fall's pleasures. Grated nutmeg stirred into butter or crème fraîche, for example, enlivens simple baked sweet potato. Cinnamon in a short rib ragout adds an extra layer of warmth to a classic comfort food. A vinaigrette spiked with clove can transform a humble salad into a seasonal treat, just as caraway sprinkled on a grilled cheese sandwich can be just the pampering you need on a dark day.

The recipes that follow showcase these flavors. A voluptuous soup presents the season's spices in layer upon unfolding layer of flavor that teases the palate in a delicate symphony. Creamy turkey risotto meets some of the season's most traditional expectations—the tang of cranberries, the earthiness of turkey, the sultry perfume of sage—in an entirely unconventional way, with the sturdiest of winter greens, lacinato kale, providing a rich yet refreshing foundation. Add oysters and naturally-spicy Sherry mignonette to start and an almost ethereal pear soup perfumed with cardamom as a finalé and you have an extraordinary fall feast.



For the Winter Squash Soup with Five-Spice Pork Belly recipe:

Go to *winemag.com/wintersquash*

Turkey Risotto with Fresh Sage and Cranberry Chutney

Risotto is one of those dishes, like soup, bread salad and gumbo, that provides a perfect canvas for leftover holiday turkey. But you needn't wait until after Thanksgiving to enjoy this dish. As the holidays approach, markets begin to stock fresh turkey, sold both whole and in pieces. And because turkey breast is the most popular cut, the more flavorful thighs, legs and wings are generally readily available at a good price. Simply roast a couple of thighs, a leg and a wing or two, reserve the best of the meat and simmer the meaty bones to make a simple stock. Cranberry chutney adds a spicy warmth and enhances the dish's compatibility with a variety of wines.

7 to 8 cups homemade turkey stock
3 tablespoons butter
2 shallots, minced
1 celery rib, minced
Kosher salt
2 teaspoons rubbed sage
2 cups Carnaroli or Vialone Nano rice
2 cups cooked turkey, preferably thigh meat, shredded
1 tablespoon minced fresh sage leaves
Black pepper in a mill
3 ounces (¾ cup) dry Jack cheese, grated
Fresh sage leaves, for garnish
*Cranberry Chutney, commercial or homemade**

Pour the turkey stock into a saucepan, set over medium heat and when it begins to boil, reduce the heat to low so that it barely simmers.

Melt the butter in a large deep saucepan set over medium low heat. Add the shallots and celery and cook slowly until soft and fragrant, about 10 to 12 minutes; do not let the vegetables brown. Season with salt and stir in the rubbed sage.

Add the rice and sauté for 2 minutes, stirring all the while, or until each grain begins to turn milky white. Add ½ cup of the stock and stir constantly until it is absorbed, adjusting the heat as needed so that it is neither too high nor too low; the stock should simmer but not boil. Continue to add stock ½ cup at a time, stirring constantly, until the rice swells and is just tender, about 18 to 20 minutes.

When there is about ½ cup of the stock remaining, fold in the turkey and the sage. Add half of the remaining stock, taste, season with salt and pepper and stir in the cheese. Remove from the heat and stir in the remaining stock.

To serve: Ladle into warm soup plates and garnish with fresh sage leaves and a spoonful of chutney. Serve immediately. *Serves 4 to 6.*

***Note:** There are several brands of cranberry chutney on the market, such as Stonewall Kitchen's (*stonewallkitchen.com*), which is among the best. It is also easy to it make at home.

Wine recommendations: The creamy delicacy of the rice combined with the earthy flavor of turkey, the perfume of the sage and the sweet tang of cranberries sug-

PHOTOS JON VAN GORDER



Three Ginger Chèvre Tart with a Spiced Walnut Crust.

gest an equally complex and delicate red wine. something luscious yet light, lest the subtle qualities of the dish be eclipsed. Pinot Noir from California's coastal vineyards provides the best possiblities. Ridgeway Family Vineyards 2007 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, from a small vineyard in southwestern Petaluma, is a stellar match.

For a more playful, lighthearted match, consider Beaujolais Nouveau, an exuberant companion to cranberries.

Lacinato Kale with Bacon & Pine Nuts

Lacinato kale, also known as dinosaur kale, Tuscan kale and *cavolo nero*, has a husky, almost meat-like depth of flavor and a texture that is sturdier, even when tender, than other winter greens. These qualities, combined with the smokiness of the bacon in this recipe, make a perfect counterpoint to the creamy risotto.

3 bunches (about 2½ pounds) lacinato kale
5 bacon slices, preferably dry-cured
1 shallot, minced
3 to 4 garlic cloves, minced
Kosher salt
Red pepper flakes
Zest of 1 lemon
½ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted

Use a sharp paring knife to remove the stems and tough ribs from the kale. Cut the leaves into 2-inch-wide crosswise slices. Put the cut leaves into a large colander; rinse but do not dry as you want water to cling to the leaves. Set aside.

Fry the bacon in a large deep saute pan until crisp; transfer to absorbent paper to drain. (Once cool, crumble the bacon.) Pour off all but about ⅓ cup of the bacon fat, return the pan to medium heat, add the shallot and sauté until soft and fragrant, about 7 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté 1 minute more. Season with salt and 2 or 3 pinches of pepper flakes. Add the kale and sauté for about 2 minutes, stirring all the while. Cover the pan and cook over low heat until the kale is tender, about 12 to 15 minutes; uncover and stir now and then.

Remove from the heat. Fold in the lemon zest, half the bacon and half the pine nuts, taste and correct for salt. Transfer to a serving bowl, scatter the remaining bacon and pine nuts on top and serve. *Serves 6 to 8.*

Wine recommendations: Kale is almost always a side dish and as such, should be taken into consideration when selecting a wine for the main course. Lacinato kale's texture, which is rich and velvety, engages well with most Pinot Noir and the bacon in this particular preparation furthers the resonance. Should this dish take center stage on your table, you can stick with a Pinot Noir or shift to a plush white wine, such as Peter Michael Winery Cuvée Indigene Chardonnay.

Three-Ginger Chèvre Tart with a Spiced Walnut Crust

This tart is thin, elegant and perfumed with three kinds of ginger, fresh, ground and candied. It unfolds on the palate in layer upon layer of flavor, qualities that engage beautifully with the Madeira that accompanies it.

For the crust

½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ cup, packed, light brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon ground clove
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¾ cup walnut pieces, lightly toasted
1½ cups all-purpose flour

For the filling

10 ounces fresh Chèvre, such as Chabis
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 egg yolk
¾ cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
½ cup chopped candied ginger

To make the crust: Put the butter, salt, brown sugar, cinnamon, clove and ground ginger into the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade and pulse several times, until well blended. Add the vanilla and the walnuts and pulse until the walnuts are evenly incorporated into the butter mixture; use a rubber spatula to scrape the sides of the work bowl as needed. Add the flour and pulse several times, until the mixture is smooth and uniform. Transfer the dough to a bowl, cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Clean the work bowl and blade. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Press the chilled dough into a 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Bake for 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool thoroughly.

To make the filling: Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. Put the Chèvre, sugar, egg and egg yolk into the work bowl of the food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the cream and fresh ginger and pulse until just smooth; do not overprocess.

Spread the candied ginger over the surface of the crust, pour the Chèvre custard over the candied ginger and agitate the tart pan very gently to even it out, if needed. Set the tart on a baking sheet and set the baking sheet on the middle rack of the oven and bake for about 25 minutes or until the custard is firm and the top is pale gold.

Remove from the oven, let cool for about 15 minutes and remove the ring of the tart pan. Cut into wedges and serve warm or at room temperature. *Serves 6 to 8.*

Wine recommendations: This rich, fragrant dessert, with its layers of ginger, wants something slightly lean on the palate, yet elegant and engaging. You can't go wrong with a well-aged Madeira but fans of single-malt Scotch, especially those of Islay, will be delighted by the flirtatious resonance of the match. Try Laphroaig 15 Year Old.



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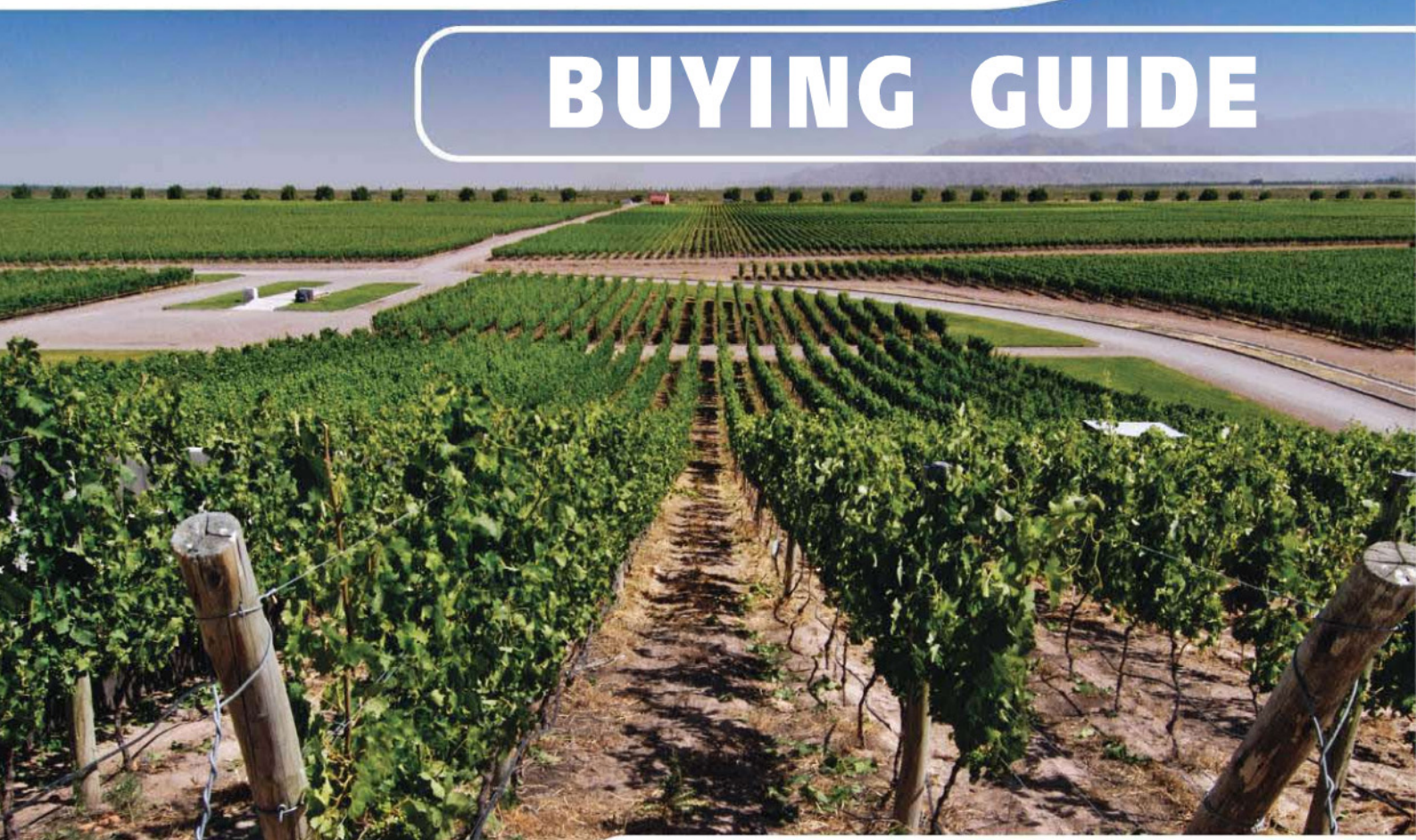
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WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE

BUYING GUIDE



The vineyards of Monteviejo, Argentina. Certain blocks are the fruit source for Clos de los Siete, one of Mendoza's great red blends.

PHOTO MATT WILSON/CEPHAS

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Argentina

DISPELLING THE MALBEC MYTH

There's no doubt that Argentine wines have been on fire in the United States this year. And much of that growth is directly attributable to the phenomenal success of what has become the country's signature grape, Malbec. But there's more to like about Argentina, as this month's Buying Guide so clearly shows.

Contributing Editor Michael Schachner has been covering the wines of Argentina for upward of 10 years now, and his reviews in this issue encompass a range of top-flight offerings that extends beyond Malbec, into balanced Cabernet Sauvignons, emerging Syrahs and world-class Pinot Noirs from the cool fringes of Patagonia. To date, the country's white wines have been less successful overall, but this issue spotlights some solid Chardonnays, Viogniers and the country's home-grown hero white, Torrontés.

For higher-rated—and more expensive—white wines, check out European Editor Roger Voss's coverage of the latest white Burgundies. He reviewed 248 for this month's issue, from grand crus to the humble wines of the Maconnais. This month, we've opted to include the more affordable wines of Burgundy's south in print. If you really have to know how the newest release of Comtes Lafon's Meursault Perrières looks, visit our comprehensive online Buying Guide at *buyingguide.winemag.com.*

We haven't forgotten that November means Thanksgiving, so there's a larger-than-normal complement of American wines in this month's Buying Guide, with the emphasis on California and Washington. But you'll also find dozens of affordable Pinot Grigios from Italy, some lusty reds from Australia and a smattering of wines from Spain. Cheers! —Joe Czerwinski

ARGENTINA RED WINES

MALBEC

92 Bodega Goulart 2008 The Marshall Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); $25. Lush, pure, welcoming and sturdy, with dense black fruit aromas leading to a healthy, racy palate that's full of live-wire blackberry and cassis flavors. Seriously stacked Malbec with no timidity and a finish that oozes layered black fruit, chocolate and complexity. Drink this winter or hold until the fall-winter of 2011. 3,000 cases made. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

91 Bodegas Borbore 2006 Aya Malbec (San Juan); $NA. Opens with classy, focused leather, herb, spice and black-fruit aromas that are full but not aggressive. Juicy and fresh, wtih cherry, cassis, and raspberry flavors. Revs up and picks up steam on the finish, and the higher acidity level says age it, which isn't so common for Malbec. Drink now through 2016. Imported by RV Distributors. ***Cellar Selection.*** —M.S.

91 Pascual Toso 2008 Reserve Las Barrancas Vineyards Malbec (Mendoza); $20. Despite early woody aromas of sawdust and pencil shavings, this is yet another in a long line of fine Malbecs from Pascual Toso. The black-fruit nose equals pure power (and oak), while the palate is a potent brew of lusty blackberry, mocha and fine acidity. Long and lasting on the finish. A fine example of Mendoza Malbec. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

90 Alamos 2008 Selección Malbec (Mendoza); $20. Saturated, inky Malbec with plenty of sweet mocha, chocolate and vanilla to go with black fruit aromas. The palate is big and bold but controlled, with compact, intense flavors of berry, leather and black tea. Smooth on the finish, with soft, integrated tannins and just enough acidity to maintain freshness. Drink this year. Imported by E & J Gallo. —M.S.

90 Lopez Noceti 2008 1919 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Great Malbec for the money, and one that gives the impression that it's three or four times more expensive than it is. From 40-year-old vines, this is concentrated and complex, with graphite, plum, prune and blackberry aromas. The palate is heavy but correct, and the primary flavors of berry and plum segue into fig and chocolate with ease.

Continued on *page 103*



97 Von Strasser 2007 Reserve (Diamond Mountain); $125. Napa Bordeaux-style wines don't get much richer than this. It is extraordinary, in large part due to the perfect vintage. So rich, so ripe in fruit, and yet so brilliantly balanced in tannins and acidity. Really world-class. Made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Malbec, it offers dazzlingly complex waves of blackberry and black currant fruit, with suggestions of cocoa, spice and cedar. Drink now–2021. ***Cellar Selection.***



96 Duckhorn 2006 The Discussion (Napa Valley); $115. Duckhorn set out to make a dazzler, and succeeded. A Bordeaux blend based mainly on Cabernet Sauvignon, it has too many flavors to list, but blackberries, dark chocolate, orange peel, red licorice, bacon and dusty Indian spices surely top the list, wrapped into soft but super fine tannins. Really a first-rate wine that earns a place in the Napa pantheon. Now–2015, in a good cellar.



96 Jarvis 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $125. It's huge in extract, in the form of massively infused blackberries and black currants, cherry liqueur and sweet, smoky cedar wood from 100% new oak, with perfectly ripened tannins and a deft touch of acidity. Defines the voluptuous, Napa cult style. Should age for many years, although it's soft and delicious enough to drink now.



95 Jarvis 2006 Lake William (Napa Valley); $105. A blend of Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot, this wine defines the cult style of immediate softness and deliciousness. Aged in 100% new oak, it adds a layer of caramelized vanilla to the ultra rich blackberry, black cherry, red currant, chocolate, anise and exotic Indian spice flavors. Superb now, and should develop over the next six years.



95 Louis Latour 2008 Les Demoiselles (Chevalier-Montrachet); $275. A flinty, mineral-charactered wine, with smoke and toast flavors dominant at this stage. The power and richness are there in the background, while the white fruits fit behind the structure. It's obviously for the long haul, a powerful, tight wine. Imported by Louis Latour Inc. ***Cellar Selection.***



95 Mark Ryan 2007 Lonely Heart Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); $75. The first reserve from this winery, this is the most structured, dense and tightly layered Mark Ryan wine to date. It has the density and compact structure of Quilceda Creek, with perhaps just a shade less concentration. Aromatically complex, you can pick out early details of seed, coffee, pepper, chocolate and tobacco around the dense cassis, plum and cherry fruit. But this wine is truly a baby, and should not be touched for a decade or more. ***Cellar Selection.***



94 Efesté 2007 Big Papa Old Block Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $45. This pure Cabernet is almost jet black in color, displaying full-on aromatics of bramble and berry, suffused with earth and herb. Tannins are muscular and beautifully honed. Decant and let it breathe a few hours; the fruit expands with lush flavors of wild blackberries and cassis, dappled with light herb, and moving into a rich finish of clove, chocolate and espresso.



94 Jarvis 2008 Tempranillo (Napa Valley); $53. This is the best California Tempranillo I have ever reviewed.Grown on the estate vineyard southeast of Napa that might have its own appellation someday, it's as silky and light as a Pinot Noir, and marked by the dryness and acidity you want in a Temp. Shows savory cherry, cola, tobacco, leather and spice flavors. But beyond that, there's a complexity and structure that bring a welcome dimension to the variety. One hundred percent new French oak is not out of place. Very elegant and compelling.



94 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2008 Freestone Hills Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $40. The Freestone area is one of the coolest regions in the sprawling Sonoma Coast. Acidity marks this bone-dry, elegant wine. It tastes like somebody gave a squirt of lime to the cherry, raspberry, cola, persimmon, pomegranate and sandalwood flavors. Seems like a natural for the cellar. Drink 2012–2016. ***Cellar Selection.***



93 Efesté 2009 Evergreen Riesling (Columbia Valley); $16. Though this is calculated at 1.5% residual sugar, it seems quite dry. You'll like the excellent concentration and bracing minerality, with a mix of green berry and apple flavors. There are also nuances of spice and even a hint of caramel—it's a subtle wine with long-lasting flavors that extend into a dry, complex finish.



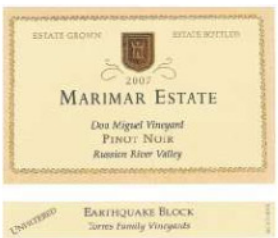
93 Ehlers Estate 2007 1886 Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); $95. This is the winery's top bottling from the estate vineyard, off Highway 29 in St. Helena. Mostly Cabernet Sauvignon, it shows the variety's blackberry and cherry flavors, with notes of violets and milk chocolate. New oak to the tune of 70% adds a rich, caramelly smokiness. Very delicious, and should develop for a few years, although the softness limits longterm cellaring.



93 Ehlers Estate 2007 Merlot (St. Helena); $45. A spectacular Merlot that could help resurrect this variety's reputation. It's as complex as anything from Napa, but is softer and more accessible than a Cabernet Sauvignon, which constitutes 8% of the blend. Shows ripe flavors of red cherry pie filling, raspberries and cola, almost like a Pinot Noir, except for the black currants that must come from the Cab, and of course the tannins, which are rich and fine. Simply gorgeous and compelling. now–2013. ***Editors' Choice.***



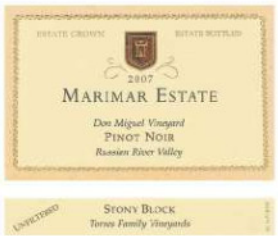
93 Louis Latour 2008 Les Folatières Premier Cru (Puligny-Montrachet); $79. An austere wine, tight and taut, drawing a fine line of apple skins and green plum over a steely, mineral character. This is going to take its time, give it 3–4 years. Imported by Louis Latour Inc. ***Cellar Selection.***



93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard Earthquake Block Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $47. This block-grown Pinot from the estate vineyard, in the heart of the cool Green Valley, shows the signature Marimar style of tight acidity, dryness, silky elegance and red fruit. It's not a big, fat, block-buster Pinot, but a leaner, more masculine style. The raspberry, cherry, red currant and sandalwood flavors should hold up well to the aging process. now–2013, at least.



93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard La Masía Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $45. The vineyard is in the cooler Green Valley, although you wouldn't know it from the label. The wine shows considerable crispness and dryness, with moderate alcohol. There are some tabasco and balsam notes grounding the richer cherry and sandalwood flavors. It's enormously elegant, a smooth, complex, silky Pinot Noir that should develop through the next six years. ***Cellar Selection.***



93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard Stony Block Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $47. Grown at the highest part of the Green Valley estate vineyard, this Pinot is tight and concentrated in raspberry, cherry, cola and Indian spices, with a delightful mineralty and a rich coat of new oak. Acidity and fine tannins give it elegant structure. Give it a few years to let the parts come together. ***Cellar Selection.***



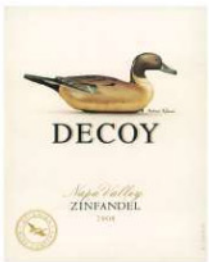
93 Mario Bazan 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $50. A terrific Cabernet that feels lush and important in the mouth. Just shows that classic Napa Valley elegance of tannins, with well-ripened fruity flavors of blackberries, currants and cedar. Maybe too soft for the long haul, but an impressive beauty now and for the next few years.



93 Reininger 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); $38. From a near-perfect vintage, this is a sleek, stylish, refined Cabernet. It is less forward and broadly fruity than past Reiningers, but showcases the strengths of the vintage—grip, elegance, detail, and balance. There is plenty of fruit – black cherry and cassis – with layers of smoke, anise, coffee, and bitter chocolate. Still quite tight and young, this is a wine to cellar and enjoy for a decade or more. ***Cellar Selection.***



92 Bodega Goulart 2008 The Marshall Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); $25. Lush, pure, welcoming and sturdy, with dense black fruit aromas leading to a healthy, racy palate that's full of live-wire blackberry and cassis flavors. Seriously stacked Malbec with no timidity and a finish that oozes layered black fruit, chocolate and complexity. Drink this winter or hold until the fall-winter of 2011. 3,000 cases made. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc.



92 Decoy 2008 Zinfandel (Napa Valley); $22. This wonderful wine showcases the blender's art. The grapes come from 11 appellations throughout the valley, and the wine, while notable for its delicious flavors, also is great in structure. It has soft tannins and refreshing acidity, and is entirely dry, with moderate alcohol. Those flavors include raspberry jam, cherry-vanilla cream, cinnamon and white pepper. So easy to like. ***Editors' Choice.***



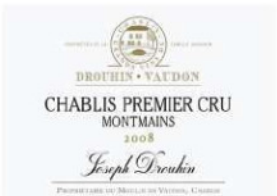
92 Efesté 2009 Feral Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley); $18. From the Evergreen vineyard, and again it was barrel fermented in neutral French oak. The aromas are wild and true, sweet herb and grass, suffused with marmalade and honey. The wine is intensely bright and spicy, with sharply-defined citrus fruits and rinds, and exceptional length.



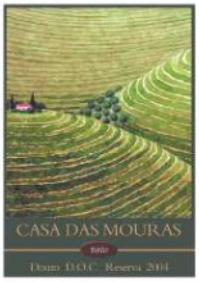
92 Efesté 2007 Final-Final Cabernet-Syrah (Columbia Valley); $25. Deep purple/black, it explodes into lush fruit flavors of tangy boysenberry, blackberry, black cherry and cassis, with a smoky black licorice streak woven through. The tannin management is exceptional here—firm and substantial, without any bitter or green aspect. This is a supple, powerful, and ageworthy wine with depth and muscle unusual in this price range. ***Editors' Choice.***



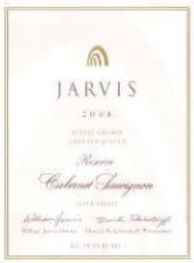
92 Efesté 2008 Lola Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); $30. Truly done in a Burgundian style, with bracing minerality and sweet, liquorous oak and apple cider flavors. The tangy fruit mixes fresh lemon and orange juice, pineapple and candied rind.



92 Joseph Drouhin 2008 Domaine Drouhin-Vaudon Montmains Premier Cru (Chablis); $38. A wine that delivers great freshness, a bright lemon and grapefruit character, tautly mineral in character, almost steely, with a pure line of green fruits. Age for 2–3 years. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.



92 Wines & Winemakers 2004 Casa das Mouras Reserva (Douro); $20. With six years' aging, this is a delicious, soft and mature wine. The fruit and acidity have been subsumed into a balsam and spice flavored wine, with a touch of mint and sweet chocolate. It is delicious now, not for aging further. Imported by Iberia Wine & Spirits LLC. ***Editors' Choice.***



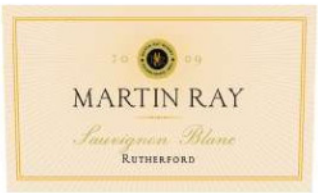
91 Jarvis 2005 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $85. It's all about sweet, delicious flavor in this 100% Cabernet. Dazzles the mouth with the essence of blackberries, cassis, cherry tart with the smoky crust, chocolate and exotic sandalwood, wrapped into the richest, finest tannins you can imagine. Compulsively drinkable, if a little too forward with its charms. Now–2013.



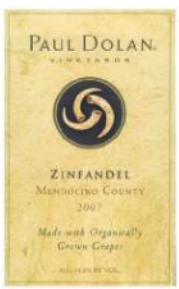
91 Jarvis 2007 Petite Verdot (Napa Valley); $80. Loads of plum, dark chocolate, blackberry and exotic spices in this big, dry wine. Oak, too, in the form of exquisite vanilla and caramel. It's absolutely delicious, but maybe a little one-dimensional, showing that Petit Verdot by itself needs some help from other varieties.



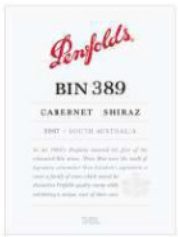
91 Longboard 2007 Syrah (Russian River Valley); $28. A beautiful Syrah for drinking now with an elaborate steak or chop. It's bone dry and medium-bodied, with lush flavors of blackberries and cherries, violets, smoked meat, licorice, cola and sandalwood, finished with oodles of peppery spices. Feels fancy and detailed in the mouth.



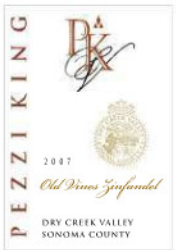
91 Martin Ray 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); $20. What a lovely wine to sip as a cocktail. It's almost like a fino Sherry, with brisk acidity and a clean, salty tanginess that stimulates the mouth and prepares it for food. Shows a bone-dry minerality that undergirds the citrus and lemongrass flavors. Really fine, with controlled alcohol. Production was 1,366 cases. ***Editors' Choice.***



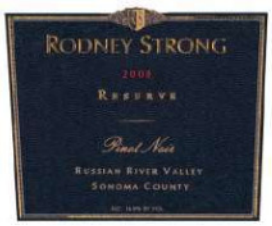
91 Paul Dolan 2007 Zinfandel (Mendocino County); $25. This is a lovely Zinfandel, soft and appealing. It has fine balance and is dry and rich in cherry, currant, Provençal herb, spice and tobacco flavors. Shows real complexity as it changes in the glass. ***Editors' Choice.***



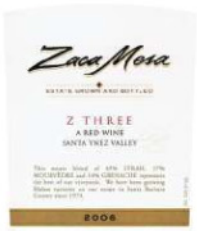
91 Penfolds 2007 Bin 389 Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz (South Australia); $36. The most recent release of Penfolds' "Baby Grange" is a beauty, loaded with the chocomint character that has made it famous. Dark berry and cassis take over on the creamy, lushly textured midpalate, finishing long and velvety. Drink now or hold up to 15 years. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. ***Cellar Selection.***



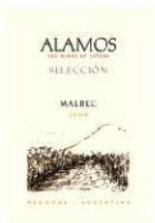
91 Pezzi King 2007 Old Vines Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $24. A vigorous, deeply flavored Zinfandel, made from old vines. Impressive for the depth of its black and red wild berry fruit, with nuances of anise, cocoa and a touch of raisins. And lots of spice, which suggests pepper steak. But be warned, the alcohol is very high.



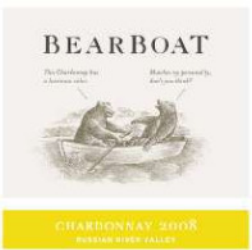
91 Rodney Strong 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $40. Made in an immediately appealing style, this Pinot is soft and lush and vast in fruit and oak richness. It floods the palate with cherry and raspberry pie filling, vanilla, cinnamon and sandalwood flavors, and the texture is silky and elegant.



91 Zaca Mesa 2006 Z Three (Santa Ynez Valley); $42. A very good wine, delicious and soft, although it shows a certain one-dimensionality. But what a delicious dimension that is. Floods the mouth with blackberry, cherry and raspberry tart, milk chocolate, red licorice, spicy bacon and smoky sandalwood flavors. Easy to like, a lot, although it shows some heat toward the finish. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache.



90 Alamos 2008 Selección Malbec (Mendoza); $20. Saturated, inky Malbec with plenty of sweet mocha, chocolate and vanilla to go with black fruit aromas. The palate is big and bold but controlled, with compact, intense flavors of berry, leather and black tea. Smooth on the finish, with soft, integrated tannins and just enough acidity to maintain freshness. Drink this year. Imported by E & J Gallo.



90 Bearboat 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $17. Made in a Chablis style, this Chardonnay is bone dry and crisp in acidity. The pineapple and peach flavors are integrated with stony minerals. It's not a complex wine, but is super-clean and zesty, a nice complement to shellfish, mushroom risotto or a perfectly roasted chicken. ***Editors' Choice.***



90 Bellingham 2005 Dragon's Lair (Franschhoek); $19. This is a lush and enticing wine with notes of black berry liqueur, crushed violets, black cherry and a touch of cigar box. The mouthfeel is creamy and full with robust fruit flavors carrying through to the long finish. Sexy and very drinkable now, so drink up and enjoy! Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.



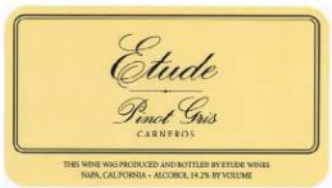
90 Efesté 2007 Ceidleigh Syrah (Red Mountain); $34. Pronounced Kay-lee, this Red Mountain Syrah remains a bit tight and tannic, with hints of green tea in the finish. The fruit is tart and compact, with a nose of blueberry and brown sugar. Tannins are quite hard and slightly bitter; this will require some further cellaring.



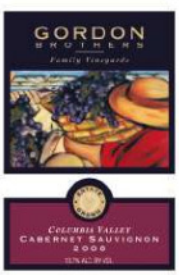
90 Ehlers Estate 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (St. Helena); $28. Made with no oak, this 100% Sauvignon Blanc shows the way the variety's flavors develop in the winery's estate vineyard in St. Helena. Those totally dry flavors are of Meyer lemons, lemongrass, melons, golden mangoes and perfectly ripe pears, and they are boosted by mouthwateringly crisp acidity. A lovely wine that shows how well Sauvignon Blanc can do in Napa's flatlands that are unsuitable for Cabernet Sauvignon. ***Editors' Choice.***



90 Ellman Family 2008 Alexis Skye Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $49. Tremendously complex, offering ever-changing elements for the palate to discover. Cherries, raspberries, dusty spices, gingerbread, bacon fat, sweet vanilla, toast, they all flood together. Delicious, but seems a little soft, possibly lacking the structure to age.



90 Etude 2009 Pinot Gris (Carneros); $24. A beautiful Pinot Gris that defines the drier, more elegant style in California. This 2009 is entirely consistent with past vintages from Etude, which have been superior. Shows Meyer lemon, lime, vanilla and peppery spice flavors, with a long, distinguished finish. Etude hasn't raised the price in many years. Production was 3,319 cases. ***Editors' Choice.***



90 Gordon Brothers 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $23. All estate-grown, this beautifully crafted Cabernet is a fine expression of Columbia Valley fruit. It's lifted with juicy berry and black cherry flavors, then expanded with notes of cola, earth, leaf, herb and roasted coffee. Everything is in proportion, and the overall impression is of balance and elegance; depth without excess. It's a style of Cabernet that may have fallen out of favor, but shows exceptional grape growing and winemaking skills.



90 Hess Collection 2008 Chardonnay (Mount Veeder); $35. This enormously rich Chardonnay was grown in the winery's dramatic mountain vineyard. It's powerful in concentrated pineapple jam and lemon fruit, while winemaker interventions add creamy notes of vanilla, honey and buttered toast. What it trades in nuance, it more than makes up for in sheer power.



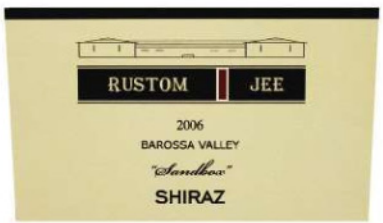
90 J. Lohr 2009 Carol's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $24. Nice and dry, with a crisp cut of acidity that gets those tastebuds whistling. If you like gooseberries, it's for you, although there are far richer tropical fruit flavors in this lovely wine. The vineyard is in St. Helena.



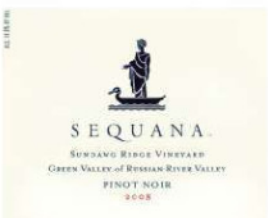
90 Jarvis 2006 Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley); $65. A very pretty wine, dry and delicious in cherry pie filling, cocoa, spice and sandalwood flavors. The tannins are just perfect, rich and soft, providing a velvety texture to the richness. Cabernet Sauvignon constitutes 11% of the blend, but the wine still shows that Cabernet Franc, by itself or almost nearly, needs something more to give it extra oomph.



90 Martin Ray 2008 Reserve Bald Mountain Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); $30. Shows the upfront fruit and oak of the popular style of Chardonnay, but earns extra points for dryness, acidity, creaminess and minerality. The fruit veers toward delicious pineapples. Drink now with rich shellfish, Ahi tuna, lobster risotto.



90 Rustom Jee 2006 Sandbox Shiraz (Barossa Valley); $45. Dark and complex, with a range of aromas and flavors extending from cola and molasses to cooked fruit and peppery spice. This full-bodied and softly textured wine boasts melted tannins and a long, savory finish. Imported by Curious Vine.



90 Sequana 2008 Sundawg Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir (Green Valley); $50. You'll find an unusual note of freshly crushed black pepper in this Pinot Noir. Not overwhelming, but enough to vie with the cherries, cola and sandalwood. It's an excellent wine, dry and silky, although not on a par with the magnificent 2007.



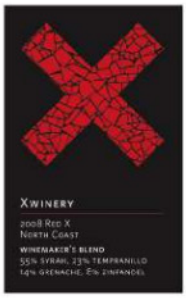
90 Viña Alicia 2007 Paso de Piedra Cabernet Sauvignon (Luján de Cuyo); $19. Initial aromas of tire rubber, smoke, black fruits and leather are good and rich, but in a common, understandable way. Smooth and chunky on the palate, with warmth and flavors of blackberry, fig paste and chocolate. Finishes roasted and dark. A thorough Argentine Cabernet with no glaring weaknesses. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc.



90 Weingut Burg Ravensburg 2008 Husarenkappe GG Riesling (Baden); $32. Reasonably priced for a Grosses Gewächs wine, this medium-bodied Riesling displays a broad, creamy texture and lingering notes of melon, peach and even a hint of passion fruit, all layered over a bed of gravelly minerality. Imported by USA Wine Imports.



89 Waterstone 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); $18. This is a really nice wine. It tastes like Merlot should, soft and fruity. Shows cherry, violet, bacon and sandalwood flavors that finish long and spicy. Great value for a wine of this quality. Drink now. ***Editors' Choice.***



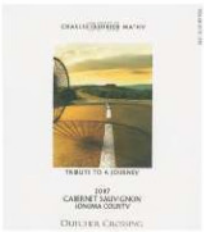
89 X 2008 Red X Winemaker's Blend (North Coast); $15. Here's a sound, easy-drinking and full-bodied red wine that's very versatile at the table. Made from an unusual combination of Syrah, Tempranillo, Grenache and Zinfandel, it's dry and robust, with super-spicy flavors of blackberries, currants and chocolate. ***Editors' Choice.***



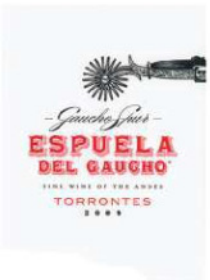
89 Zaca Mesa 2008 Grenache Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); $25. A very rich, opulent white wine, made from 100% of this rare Rhône variety. Brims with spicy tangerine marmalade flavors, with the vanilla and smoky caramel from ten months in French oak. A brisk spine of acidity provides clean balance to the richness.



89 Zaca Mesa 2008 Z Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); $32. Super rich, with exotic flavors of vanilla orange cream, pineapple brulée, pear tart and yellow apricot jam. The opulence is balanced with fine acidity, but the wine is a little too forward, lacking nuance. A blend of Grenache Blanc and Roussanne.



88 Dutcher Crossing 2007 Tribute to a Journey Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); $40. A fine Cabernet, dry and balanced. It's rich in blackberries, anise and currants, with an herbaceousness that grounds it. Food-friendly, and totally drinkable now.

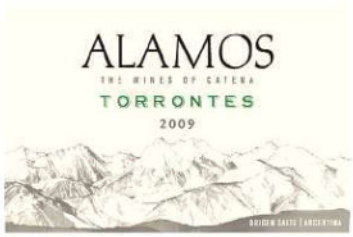


88 Espuela del Gaucho 2009 Torrontés (Mendoza); $15. Opens with classic lychee and melon aromas and only a touch of flower blossom. The palate has a nice, clean, healthy feel and flavors of green apple, lime and melon. Exceedingly clean and easygoing, with juicy acidity and proper balance. Imported by Winery Exchange.

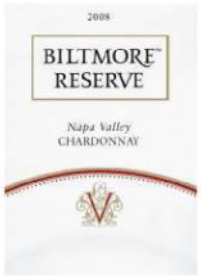


88 Ludwig 2008 Sweetwater Vineyard Riesling (Monterey); $14. A really nice wine, especially if you're looking for something from California that's bone dry and modest in alcohol. Sleek with mouth-cleansing acidity, it shows intricate flavors of apricots, green apples and grapefruits. ***Editors' Choice.***

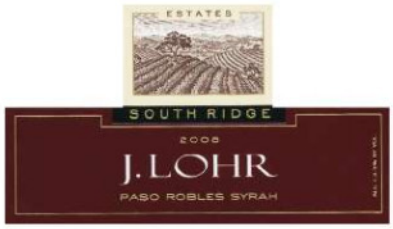
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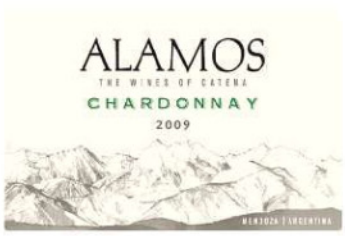
87 Alamos 2009 Torrontés (Salta); $13. Full on the nose, with ripe, floral, lively aromas of gardenia, lychee and melon. A certain weightiness carries onto the palate, where melon, soft apple and spice notes reign. Oily and textured, with a Gewürztraminer-like personality and flavor profile. Imported by E & J Gallo.



87 Biltmore 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); $20. This is one of the drier Chardonnays out there. You won't find that fat, opulent Alexander Valley tropical fruit, but something more akin to Chablis. The flavors are of minerals and dried herbs, with background notes of pineapples, pears and oak.



87 J. Lohr 2008 South Ridge Syrah (Paso Robles); $15. Here's a soft, delicious Syrah for drinking now with broiled or grilled meats. It's nice and dry and full-bodied, with interesting flavors of blackberries, sweet leather, bacon, red licorice, herbs and black pepper. At this price, it's a great restaurant by-the-glass selection. ***Editors' Choice.***



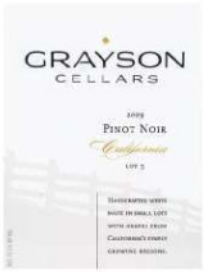
86 Alamos 2009 Chardonnay (Mendoza); $12. Consistent with past vintages, this wine features a soft, sweet nose of popcorn, buttered white fruits and baked apple. It's generic in feel, with chunky apple and citrus flavors that finish with pineapple, lemon and sweet banana. Round and easy; not edgy, hard or complicated. Imported by E & J Gallo.



85 J. Lohr 2008 Riverstone Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco); $14. Brisk acidity marks this wine, giving it a mouthwatering quality, and the flavors veer toward lemons, limes and grapefruits, with a richer touch of nectarine and pear. It's a good, everyday Chardonnay, at a fair price.

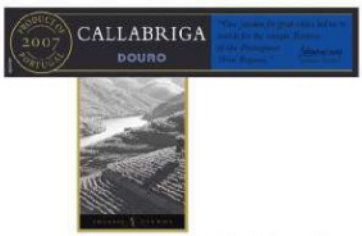


84 Vidigal 2008 (Douro); $10. Attractive, fresh, light black currant and soft tannins over a juicy, fruity texture. Screwcap. Imported by Seaman's Importers.



83 Grayson 2009 Lot 5 Pinot Noir (California); $10. A light, simple Pinot, with raspberry tea and stale cola flavors. It's light and silky in the mouth, and nicely dry.

BESTBUYS

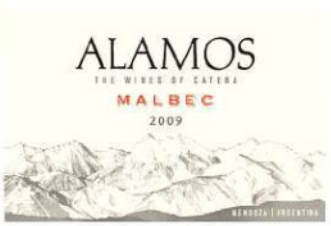


91 Sogrape 2007 Callabriga (Douro); $15. From vineyards in the Douro Superior, this is a rich wine, shot through with dark, tarry tannins, big black fruit flavors, spiced by American and French wood aging. The texture is deliciously rich and mellifluous. Imported by Evaton, Inc.



90 Laurent Miquel 2007 Nord Sud Syrah (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $14. A gorgeous and decadent Syrah with aromas and flavors of black raspberry, black cherry, fudge brownie and coffee ice cream. The lush and creamy mouth is full but not overdone, with a fantastic evolution on the palate from fresh dark fruit to sweet chocolaty flavors and finally pepper-flecked spice on the long finish. Balanced and read to drink now, though you could hold for another couple of years to mellow. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

BESTBUYS



89 Alamos 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); $13. For a big brand, Alamos knows how to deliver quality at a fair price. This vintage is exemplary for its sweet black plum and graham cracker bouquet and lush, deep palate. The fruit is tasty, balanced, dark in nature and just a little bit spicy. For a basic-priced Malbec it more than gets the job done. Imported by E & J Gallo.

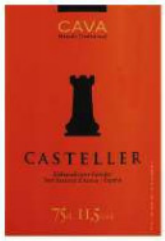


89 Analivia 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); $11. Nice and fresh, and definitely the best vintage of Analivia we've tasted to date. The nose bursts with floral aromas, apricot, apple and minerality, while the palate is clean as a whistle, with apple, tangerine and pineapple flavors. Slightly pithy on the finish, but that's normal for Verdejo from Rueda. Imported by Luneau USA Inc.



89 Wines & Winemakers 2008 Azul Portugal (Douro); $10. Ripe and smooth wine, with a rich Port-like aroma, the sweet fruit structured with some fresh stalky tannins. Great herbal and wild berry flavors to finish. Imported by Iberia Wine & Spirits LLC.

BESTBUYS



88 Casteller NV Brut (Cava); $10. Crisp and nice Cava with good balance, clean apple, dusty spices and pithy lemon. Fold it all together on the nose, palate and finish and you wind up with a well-made, attractive, easy-to-sip bubbly with some polish. Textbook everyday Cava. Imported by Ole Imports.

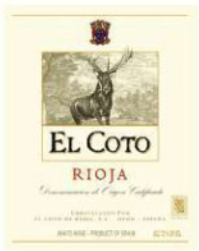


88 Colores del Sol 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Smoked meat, rubber, char and leathery darkness are all good aromas for a value-priced Malbec. The palate is adequately deep and lush, and it maintains pulse and verve while delivering robust flavors of black fruits and herbs. Meaty and pretty long on the finish, and very good Malbec for the money. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas.

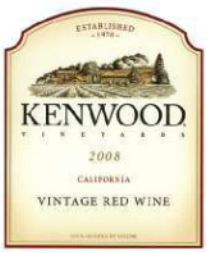


88 Douglas Green 2009 Vineyard Creations Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); $10. Vibrant, tart aromas of green gooseberries and lime rind elevate the underlying hay and fresh thyme herbal accents. Lean, barely ripe white peach and hard pear add volume to the medium-weight mouth. Balanced and seamless with a clean, refreshing finish. Drink up! Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.

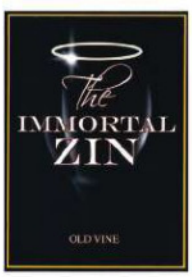
BESTBUYS



88 El Coto 2009 Viura (Rioja); $10. Good, clean and pleasant. The nose has pure apple and pear aromas along with a hint of vanilla and powdered sugar. It's fresh in the mouth, with lively apple, white peach and green banana flavors. Closes well and stays zesty and true from start to finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

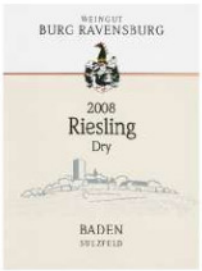


88 Kenwood 2008 Vintage Red (California); $9. A great success, as this bottling has been for decades. The wine, which is a blend of Petite Sirah, Merlot and Sangiovese, is dry and rich and balanced, showing lots of finesse in the cherry, currant, licorice, mocha and cedar flavors. Easy to find, with 24,000 cases produced.



88 Peirano 2008 The Immortal Zin Zinfandel (Lodi); $12. This is a spiritous Zinfandel, in the sense it feels richly soft, unctuous and alcoholic in the mouth, and there's a sweetness to the cherries and chocolate that's almost Port-like, in a good sense. Great barbecue wine, or for drinking with chocolate by a fire on a winter night.

BESTBUYS



88 Weingut Burg Ravensburg 2008 Freiherr von Goeler Dry Riesling (Baden); $13. A lovely and versatile Riesling, filled with lime, floral and apple and pear shadings. This medium-bodied, barely off-dry wine features pristine citrus and tree fruit flavors on the midpalate, then ends on a slightly spicy note. Imported by USA Wine Imports.



87 Callia 2009 Alta Shiraz (Tulum Valley); $9. A big improvement over the 2008; this wine has some heat on the nose but otherwise it brings solid berry aromas. The palate has size and lift, with cola, black cherry and roasted plum flavors. Finishes thick and a little spicy and savory. Fresh, clean and good as a whole. Imported by Palm Bay International.

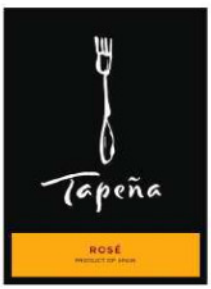


87 Les Jamelles 2009 Grenache Rosé (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $11. Extremely pale pink in color with a delicate nose of white strawberry, sweet pea florals and white cranberry vibrancy. The palate is zippy and fresh with flavors of small red berries and tangerine juice. Lightweight in the mouth with balanced acidity and a clean, concise finish. Drink now. Imported by Cellar Door Selections.

BESTBUYS



87 Line 39 2009 Chardonnay (North Coast); $9. A very nice Chardonnay for fans of the ripe, oaky style, at a great price. It's rich in pineapple, cream and vanilla flavors, with zesty acidity and a honeyed finish.



87 Tapeña 2009 Rosé (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla); $10. Neutral, minerally, salinic and refreshing on the nose, which is exactly what this critic wants from a $10 rosado. The palate is juicy and clean, with acid-driven flavors of pink grapefruit, tangerine and nectarine. Finishes in straight-ahead fashion, with snap and cleansing acids. Imported by Freixenet USA.



87 Yellow Tail 2008 Reserve Merlot (South Eastern Australia); $12. Merlot isn't what Australia is known for, but this is a tasty, toothsome wine at a realistic price. Delicate notes of cinnamon, clove and cocoa accent black cherries and cassis in this soft, creamy-textured effort. Drink it over the next year. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons.

BESTBUYS



86 Aconga 2009 Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Mendoza); $9. Not many Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay blends are coming out of Argentina, so pay attention to this acid-driven, Chenin-heavy wine with apple and white peach aromas and tart apple and clean citrus flavors. Cleansing and healthy more than complex or elevated. Imported by Winery Exchange.

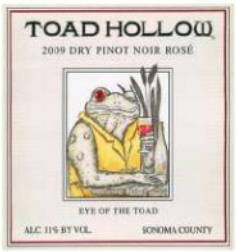


86 La Vis 2009 Simboli Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $10. The Simboli line from Gruppo La-Vis offers good value and quality to match. This luminous Pinot Grigio is redolent of peach blossom, pink grapefruit, pear and apple. It's light, crisp and lively on the close. Imported by F&F Fine Wines International.



86 Les Jamelles 2009 Cinsault Rosé (Vin de Pays d'Oc); $11. A bit rounder than Les Jamelles' Grenache rosé, this Cinsault-based rosé offers light aromas of bay leaves, baby powder and strawberry hull on the nose. The medium-weight mouth shows dried red cherry and plum flavors that are lifted by bracing acidity on the finish. Imported by Cellar Door Selections.

BESTBUYS



86 Toad Hollow 2009 Eye of the Toad Dry Pinot Noir Rosé (Sonoma County); $10. One of the more successful Pinot Noir rosés, this one is dry, as the label promises, and crisp in acidity. That makes the strong raspberry and vanilla cola flavors feel clean and bright.



86 Volteo 2009 Garnacha Rosé (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla); $10. Punchbowl sweetness is the aromatic greeting, and overall the nose is clean and bright. It's tangy and fresh in the mouth, with dry, crisp red plum and cherry flavors. Properly acidic throughout, and more than competent as a whole. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons.



85 Bella Sera 2009 Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $7. No doubt this is a simple wine, but it's zippy freshness and overall informality wins it points. You can't go wrong here: the wine is clean, tonic and drinks ever so easily, sip after refreshing sip. A small percentage of Chardonnay is added for extra creaminess. Imported by Bella Sera USA.

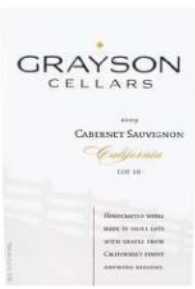
BESTBUYS



85 Caposaldo 2009 Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $10. This is a bright, affordable Pinot Grigio that offers pristine aromas of passion fruit, citrus and green fruit. There's zesty spice on the crisp close and the wine keeps the palate very refreshed. Imported by Kobrand.



85 Deakin Estate 2008 Shiraz (Victoria); $7. Not too many places in the world can turn out wine this good for such a low price. Hints of tobacco leaf add nuance to this wine's basic flavors of cherries and cranberries, and while it is not a hugely concentrated effort, it does offer complexity and drinkability. Imported by Freixenet USA.



85 Grayson 2009 Lot 10 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); $10. A solid Cabernet whose price makes it a great house wine. The wine is dry and fine, with blackberry, currant, carob and cedar flavors.

FOR MORE WINE RATINGS, VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT
buyingguide.winemag.com

BESTBUYS



85 Lagaria 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $10. Here's an easy, hay-colored Pinot Grigio with no-fuss aromas of citrus, grapefruit and a touch of cut grass. It's a crisp, refreshing wine that would wash down well with steamed mussels with garlic and parsley. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd.



85 Santa Florentina 2009 Malbec (Famatina Valley); $8. Aromas of sweet fruit and chocolate-mint are nice, while the palate is creamy and fluffy, with candied, vanilla-infused flavors and soft, pillowy tannins. Berry jam in a glass, with plenty of cream and mocha to make it soft and candied. Imported by Biagio Cru & Estate Wines, LLC.



84 Spinelli 2009 Pinot Grigio (Terre di Chieti); $8. This well-priced Pinot Grigio from the Abruzzo region in central Italy offers loads of mature fruit, apricot and cantaloupe melon backed by a creamy, silky texture. There's note of butterscotch or yellow candy at the back. Imported by Francoli USA.

SPIRITS



96 WhistlePig Straight Rye Whiskey (WhistlePig Farm Distillery, Shoreham, VT, U.S.); 50% abv, $70. First, a warning: this is only for those who like their rye big and brawny. It starts off innocuously with a maple-syrup color, and a pretty, complex and subtle scent: honey, vanilla, a sight medicinal tinge and faint clover notes. It feels silky on the tongue and at first, the flavors reflect caramel, burnt orange and a whisper of smoke, but then a mouth-warming wave of tannic bite sweeps over all and lingers for a good long time. Straight up or on the rocks.



95 Hudson Manhattan Rye Whiskey (Tuthilltown Spirits, Gardiner, NY, U.S.) 46% abv, $36/375 ml. Balanced, light and versatile, and likely a good foil for cocktails. Smoky fragrance with hints of caramel and dried apricots. The golden color, medium weight and flavors pleasantly evoke maple syrup and caramel at first, although zingy, oaky flavors soon follow. With ice, the wood becomes more pronounced. A nice, smooth and dry finish lingers but doesn't overstay its welcome.

Imported by Simone International. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

89 Alamos 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); $13. For a big brand, Alamos knows how to deliver quality at a fair price. This vintage is exemplary for its sweet black plum and graham cracker bouquet and lush, deep palate. The fruit is tasty, balanced, dark in nature and just a little bit spicy. For a basic-priced Malbec it more than gets the job done. Imported by E & J Gallo. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

89 Aquilina 2006 Premium Malbec (Mendoza); $15. Light and earthy, with cedar, moss and mild, well-aged red fruit aromas. It's a solid rendition of older-school red wine. Mature, mellow and baked, with roast plum and mocha. Long and earthy on the finish, and drinking at its most mature and best state now. Imported by Rhodes Importing. —M.S.

89 Bodega Renacer 2006 Punto Final Reserva Malbec (Perdriel); $20. Potent and black, with inky, minty aromas that suggest asphalt, tobacco and blackberry. The palate is gritty and seriously concentrated, with dark, oak-driven fruit that carries a tight, lemony personality. Licorice, toast and other black-ish notes bring it home. Ripe but can still age for another 5+ years. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

89 Ruca Malen 2007 Kinien Malbec (Mendoza); $45. Sweet, forward aromas of mocha, blackberry, cotton candy and vanilla signal a rich wine. The palate is round and chunky, with a spot of elegance but more size and force. Flavors of chunky blackberry are slightly salty and salinic at the edges, while overall it's thick, fruity and black in nature. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

88 Argento 2009 El Colectivo Malbec (Mendoza); $10. Nicely done and not the least bit difficult or complicated. The nose is full of bold black fruit and balsam wood, while the palate is full and stocky, but balanced. Flavors of berry and cherry are forward and sticky rich, while the finish is long and shows just enough acidity to keep things focused. Imported by Lion Nathan. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

88 Bodega Norton 2007 Privada Malbec (Mendoza); $25. A heavy, roasted, charred nose gives this a dark outlook, and the bulky but smooth palate of black fruits and baked flavors does little to lessen the load. Feels good on the finish, although it tastes rather normal and a touch bitter. Round and fairly rich Malbec. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

88 Colores del Sol 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Smoked meat, rubber, char and leathery darkness are all good aromas for a value-priced Malbec. The palate is adequately deep and lush, and it maintains pulse and verve while delivering robust flavors of black fruits and herbs. Meaty and pretty long on the finish, and very good Malbec for the money. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

88 Ruca Malen 2009 Yauquen Malbec (Mendoza); $12. Quintessential Best Buy stuff, with full aromas of meaty berry and leather. Concentrated and dark across the palate, with full-bodied black fruit, black olive and savory flavors. Offers all the color, weight and fruit that a $12 wine should. Imported by Opici Import Company. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

87 Bodega Goulart 2009 Clásico Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); $12. Forceful on the nose, with floral berry and a spot of toast and earthy mineral. The palate is chunky and rich, with soft, grapey blackberry and quasi-syrupy black-fruit flavors. Viscous, creamy and generous, with soft tannins and controlled acidity. Drink this fall and winter. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

87 Finca Agostino 2007 Malbec (Mendoza); $19. Rooty aromas of baked fruit and coffee/mocha set the stage for a chunky, thick palate of semi-salty berry fruit. There's a medium level of ripeness and sweetness here, which is broadened by oak, resin and vanilla notes. A good but typically bulky Malbec. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.S.

87 Manos Negras 2007 Malbec (Mendoza); $15. Latex, tire rubber, sauciness, mocha and cotton candy all share the nose, while the palate is forward, a touch scratchy and filled with bold black cherry and plum flavors. Shows some toast and burn on the finish, and overall it's a good Malbec with some mild bite and abrasiveness. Imported by Vino Del Sol. —M.S.

87 Martino 2007 Old Vine Malbec (Mendoza); $19. Spicy and scratchy on the bouquet, with clove, leather and dried berry fruit aromas. The acidity seems a touch sharp, and thus the palate has a prickly, spiky feel along with firm flavors of red plum and cherry. Good and aggressive, but also somewhat of a burner with a scouring feel. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

86 Concha y Toro 2009 Xplorador Malbec (Mendoza); $8. A little sharp and cheesy on first sniff, but for $8 this has a lot of quality going in its favor. The palate is sweet and fairly rich, with slightly spiky berry flavors. The finish is regular but short, with clean flavors and some bulk. Full-bodied for a value wine, with above-average brightness and clarity. Imported by Banfi Vintners. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

85 Bodegas Borbore 2008 Avanti Malbec (San Juan); $12. Light stemmy aromas kick it off in a semigreen, moderately raw direction. The palate has a good feel to it despite some heat, and the red fruit palate shows mild sharpness and angularity. Somewhat raw and clacky on the finish, but in this price range it's about average. Imported by RV Distributors. —M.S.

85 Los Cowboys 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); $12. One look at the name and label and it screams "new concept wine designed for exploding Malbec market," which doesn't mean it's bad. The nose is rubbery and full of berry fruit, while the palate is high in acid and a touch sharp, leading to sweet-tart berry flavors in front of a simple finish. Good wine but highly regular. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

85 Santa Florentina 2009 Malbec (Famatina Valley); $8. Aromas of sweet fruit and chocolate-mint are nice, while the palate is creamy and fluffy, with candied, vanilla-infused flavors and soft, pillowy tannins. Berry jam in a glass, with plenty of cream and mocha to make it soft and candied. Imported by Biagio Cru & Estate Wines, LLC. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

91 Kaiken 2007 Ultra Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $24. Sound as can be on the nose, with rubber, baked berry and pastry aromas. The palate has a very nice feel to it along with flavors of dark, rich blackberry, roasted black plum, chocolate, fig and mocha. Lush, modern and smooth, with just the right weight, kick and bite. Drink now through 2012. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

90 Viña Alicia 2007 Paso de Piedra Cabernet Sauvignon (Luján de Cuyo); $19. Initial aromas of tire rubber, smoke, black fruits and leather are good and rich, but in a common, understandable way. Smooth and chunky on the palate, with warmth and flavors of blackberry, fig paste and chocolate. Finishes roasted and dark. A thorough Argentine Cabernet with no glaring weaknesses. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

89 Bodega Norton 2007 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $20. Solid, compact and full-bodied, with blackberry, licorice and warm asphalt on the nose. The structure is quite good and tight, while the flavors of blackberry and cassis are sweetened and softened by mocha and creamed coffee flavors. Powerful but under control, and not too complicated. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

89 Ruca Malen 2007 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $18. Compact on the bouquet, with a pointed combo of boysenberry and blackberry aromas. The palate is full, with plenty of acidity and stuffing. Flavors of blackberry, olive, fig and chocolate are likable and the finish is loud and powerful in typical South American style. Better value than the higher-priced Kinien Cab. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

88 Bodega Atamisque 2007 Atamisque Cabernet Sauvignon (Uco Valley); $26. Aromas of blackberry, rubber, asphalt and earth are full and gritty, while the palate has a tight frame and juicy acids. Flavors of zesty red cherry and currants are clean and forward, and on the finish it rounds out nicely, with licorice as a lasting flavor. Imported by Davis Wine Imports. —M.S.

87 Bodega Norton 2007 Barrel Select Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $14. A jammy, tarry wine with aromas of leather, candy, licorice, mint and herbs. The palate has a solid, round feel and herbal flavors that hint at anisette, black cherry and chocolate mint. A bit sticky and thick but nice and generous. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

87 Trapiche 2008 Broquel Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $17. Baked and broad on the nose, with toasty aromas, marshmallow sweetness and floral hints. The palate is tight, healthy and tastes of savory, meaty fruit including black cherry and wild raspberry. Leather and herbal notes work the finish, and overall this is nice but more basic than complex. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

86 Finca Las Yeguas 2008 Gozzo Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $14. Savory, spicy and full on the nose, with aromas of grilled meat, clove and cooked molasses. The palate is juicier and more lively, with cassis and grassy cherry and green tobacco flavors. A little herbal and reedy/weedy but good with a true mouthfeel. Imported by Elemental Importers. —M.S.

85 Michel Torino 2008 Don David Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Calchaqui Valley); $16. Mocha and coffee are the lead aromas, but they are covering up herbal, almost green notes of bell pepper and tobacco. The palate has a pretty good feel along with flavors of herbs, green veggies and raspberry. Persistent and widespread green notes are the drawback; otherwise the wine has a lot going for it. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

85 Ruca Malen 2007 Kinien Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); $45. Piercing and sharp for Cabernet, with slightly stemmy, green aromas. That tough green character rides onto the palate, where the berry fruit is tight, juicy, tart and herbal. A snappy, piquant wine that isn't playing up to its price tag. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

PINOT NOIR

92 Bodega Chacra 2009 Treinta y Dos Pinot Noir (Río Negro Valley); $250. Still the most impressive Pinot in Argentina, the #32 car is showing a purple color and lots of young oak, menthol and leather on the nose. The palate is lush, deep and cushioned, while the flavors are youthful but revolve around black cherry and ripe plum. A toasty, dark, mod-

ern wine with a lovely, silky, pure texture. Best from 2012–2016. Imported by Kobrand. —M.S.

91 Bodega Chacra 2009 Cinquenta y Cinco Pinot Noir (Río Negro Valley); $120. A smooth operator with sweet aromas of cotton candy, caramel and baked black plum. The palate is exceedingly flush yet refined, while the meaty flavor profile entails roasted berry fruit and herbs. Finishes with sweet, easy notes of caramel and toast. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Kobrand. —M.S.

89 Bodega Chacra 2009 Barda Pinot Noir (Río Negro Valley); $24. Barda is Bodega Chacra's larger-production (almost 5,000 cases) PN, and while not as concentrated as 55 or 32, it's smooth, with mild spearmint and dusty berry fruit aromas. The palate is stylish and shows roast plum and spice flavors along with caramel and cola notes. Composed and satisfying. Imported by Kobrand. —M.S.

86 Familia Schroeder 2008 Saurus Barrel Fermeted Pinot Noir (Neuquén); $25. Dark in color, with vanilla, dill, tobacco and other oak-influenced aromas that give it a sort of Rioja-like nose. Full-bodied PN, with sweet plum and savory tea flavors, while the finish is spiced up and a bit chocolaty. Heavy but tasty. Imported by S Selections. —M.S.

85 Bodega del Fin del Mundo 2009 Reserva Pinot Noir (Neuquén); $19. On the reticent side in terms of aromas, with a mild soupy quality that lends earth and leather. The palate is thicker, with tannic grab and sweet, herbal berry flavors backed by a creamy, somewhat candied finish. Shows plenty of oak. Imported by Gaucho Imports, LLC. —M.S.

85 Ombu 2007 Pinot Noir (San Rafael); $13. Dry, spicy but short on fruity aromas, with semi-spiky acidity that makes the palate a little jumpy and sheer. Good berry flavors and oak mellow the stark side of the wine, leaving spice and weight on the finish. Imported by Specialty Cellars. —M.S.

SYRAH/SHIRAZ

87 Callia 2009 Alta Shiraz (Tulum Valley); $9. A big improvement over the 2008; this wine has some heat on the nose but otherwise it brings solid berry aromas. The palate has size and lift, with cola, black cherry and roasted plum flavors. Finishes thick and a little spicy and savory. Fresh, clean and good as a whole. Imported by Palm Bay International. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

85 Bodegas Borbore 2009 Martin Fierro Syrah (Tulum Valley); $10. Slightly spiky and prickly on the nose, with lightly herbal aromatic accents and flavors. The palate is chunky and just full enough, with some heat and lots of drive. Juicy, forward and solid, with a bit of herbal character. A good wine that will please those not applying too much scrutiny. Imported by RV Distributors. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

85 Four Aces 2008 Shiraz (Mendoza); $13. A creamy, mocha-infused nose starts the game in a sweet, candied direction. The palate is big and roasted, with creamy, mildly roasted flavors of black fruits. Body and acidity are about right, although the acids seem to poke and prod a bit. Fresh and good overall, but quite regular. Imported by Tastings Import Company. —M.S.

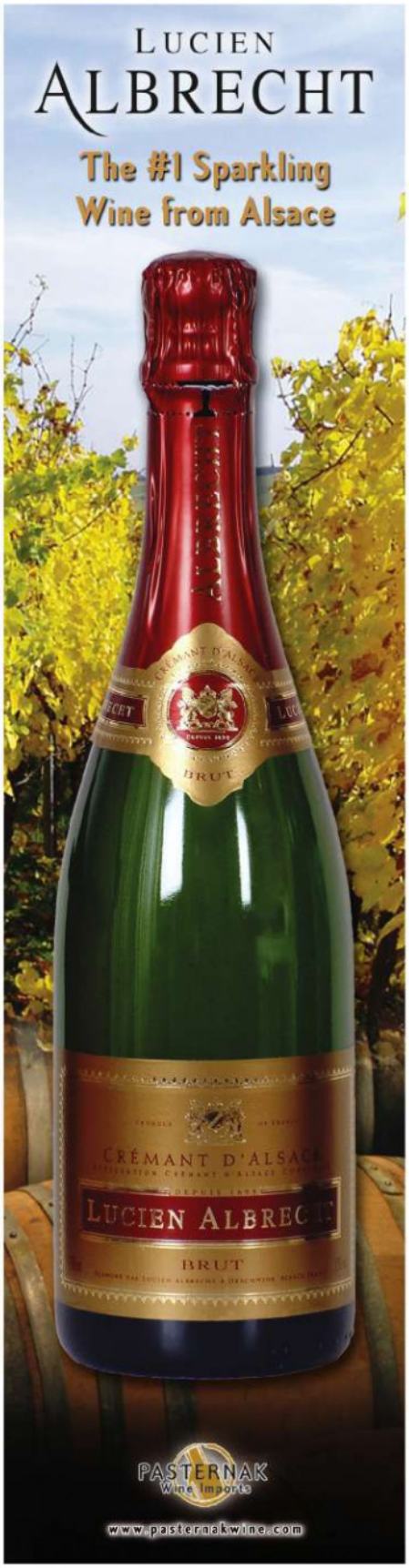
ARGENTINA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

88 Bodega Catena Zapata 2007 Catena Alta Chardonnay (Mendoza); $35. Smooth, mellow, chunky, sweet and heavily oaked. It's a modern New World Chard in every way; the palate is full, chunky and sweet, with flavors of spiced apple and tropical fruits including banana. Vanilla and cream carry the finish, and overall this is well made and rich but unctuous. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

88 Ruca Malen 2009 Reserva Chardonnay (Mendoza); $18. A more than solid wine cut from the tropical, South American blueprint. It's open and full of banana, pear and apple aromas, and while it runs hot and fast on the palate, it's got lots of woody, ripe flavors of apple and pithy citrus. Round, lively and packed with flavor even if it shows almost nothing in common with cool-climate Chardonnay. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

87 Monteviejo 2008 Lindaflor Chardonnay (Mendoza); $45. The



THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new releases and selected older wines evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*'s editors and other qualified tasters. On a regular basis the Buying Guide includes reports on special tastings and the wines of specific producers. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/ Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Executive Editor Susan Kostrzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Contributing Reviewer Jean Reilly in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Larner in Rome, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland and Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle. If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the wine, its suggested national retail price, and a tasting note. If price cannot be confirmed, $NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually or in a group setting and performed blind or in accordance with accepted industry practices. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, wines considered flawed or uncustomary are retasted.

ABOUT THE SCORES

Ratings reflect what our editors felt about a particular wine. Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about a wine's special characteristics.

Classic 98–100:	The pinnacle of quality.
Superb 94–97:	A great achievement.
Excellent 90–93:	Highly recommended.
Very Good 87–89:	Often good value; well recommended.
Good 83–86:	Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
Acceptable 80–82:	Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

Editors' Choice wines are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a wine at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.

Cellar Selections are wines deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential. A Cellar Selection designation does not mean that a wine must be stored to be enjoyed, but that cellaring will probably result in a more enjoyable bottle. In general, an optimum time for cellaring will be indicated.

Best Buys are wines that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but they are generally priced at $15 or less.

SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

Wines should be submitted to the appropriate reviewing location as detailed in our FAQ, available online via *winemag.com/contact*. Inquiries should be addressed to Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo at 914.345.8463 or email *tastings@wineenthusiast.net*. **There is no charge for submitting wines.** We make every effort to taste all wines submitted for review, but there is no guarantee that all wines submitted will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All wines must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our Web site.

LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Wineries and winery representatives are given the opportunity to submit labels, which are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza at 813.571.1122; fax 866.896.8786; or email *dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net*.

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question is how much oak can you handle? If you like a heavily toasted, resiny type of full-bodied Chardonnay, add two or three points. If you absolutely hate that style, then subtract a few points. For those of us in between, look for resiny, toasty, heavy aromas on top of a thick, chewy palate full of baked apple and tons of wood spice. One-dimensional but well made. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections. —M.S.

87 Ruca Malen 2009 Yauquen Chardonnay (Mendoza); $12. Forward in style, with lightly toasty, creamy aromas that accent baseline apple and tropical fruit scents. The palate cruises at a good pace, with citrusy apple, lemon and green pear flavors. Long, lingering and a little loud on the finish, with more than ample power and zest. Imported by Opici Import Company. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

86 Alamos 2009 Chardonnay (Mendoza); $12. Consistent with past vintages, this wine features a soft, sweet nose of popcorn, buttered white fruits and baked apple. It's generic in feel, with chunky apple and citrus flavors that finish with pineapple, lemon and sweet banana. Round and easy; not edgy, hard or complicated. Imported by E & J Gallo. —M.S.

TORRONTÉS

89 Colomé 2009 Torrontés (Calchaqui Valley); $15. Smooth, tropical and melony, with an easygoing palate that comfortably houses green melon, lime, grapefruit and other tropical fruit flavors. The finish is mildly pithy and bitter, but overall this is a clean, well-crafted wine that genuinely captures the essence of Torrontés. Imported by Hess Collection. —M.S.

88 Bodega Merced del Estero 2009 Mil Vientos Torrontés (San Juan); $15. Flowery lime, kiwi and mountain stream aromas reflect the wine's clean personality. The mouthfeel is fresh and lightly wavy, with lychee, kiwi, lime and green apple flavors. Clear throughout, with good balance and weight to the finish. Very nice for a tangy, zesty, lean sort of white. Imported by 31 Degrees South Imports. —M.S.

88 Espuela del Gaucho 2009 Torrontés (Mendoza); $15. Opens with classic lychee and melon aromas and only a touch of flower blossom. The palate has a nice, clean, healthy feel and flavors of green apple, lime and melon. Exceedingly clean and easygoing, with juicy acidity and proper balance. Imported by Winery Exchange. —M.S.

88 La Yunta 2009 Torrontés (Famatina Valley); $10. So much about Torrontés has to do with how young and fresh is the bottle you're trying. This sample shows pure lemon and citrus blossom aromas and a powdery side. The palate is crisp, chalky, and full of lemon-lime and green apple. Brings just the right blend of citrusy lemon-lime and candied sweetness to enjoy now with Asian foods and salads. Imported by Southern Wine Group. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

87 Alamos 2009 Torrontés (Salta); $13. Full on the nose, with ripe, floral, lively aromas of gardenia, lychee and melon. A certain weightiness carries onto the palate, where melon, soft apple and spice notes reign. Oily and textured, with a Gewürztraminer-like personality and flavor profile. Imported by E & J Gallo. —M.S.

86 Michel Torino 2009 Don David Reserve Torrontés (Calchaqui Valley); $16. Slightly mealy smelling on the nose, which is the complete opposite of a palate that is high in spiky acidity. Flavors of citrus and lime are pointed and a little sharp, while there's some burn and pith to the finish. Good but somewhat aggressive. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

86 Valentin Bianchi 2009 Sensual Torrontés (Mendoza); $10. A welcoming, rather pleasant white with tropical aromas and lithe, crisp flavors of white grapefruit, lychee and lemon-lime. Tangy and thorough, with a long, crisp, linear finish. Good as a fresh summer-into-fall apéritif. Imported by Quintessential Wines. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

85 Manos Negras 2009 Torrontés (San Juan); $15. Pineapple and burnt hay are the key aromas, and they are followed by a sheer, neutral palate with sour apple and background pickled flavors. The finish is basic and a touch pithy, and overall the wine could use more of that vibrant, tropical character that elevates the grape. Imported by Vino Del Sol. —M.S.

VIOGNIER

88 Luigi Bosca 2009 Finca La Linda Viognier (Luján de Cuyo); $11. A nice New World Viognier with peach and apricot aromas that come across as solid and true. The palate has size and balance, while the flavors of peach and apricot properly reflect the bouquet and bring spice into play. Fades with mild heat and bitterness on the finish, which won't be a factor if you're drinking the wine with a salad or grilled seafood. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

87 Doña Paula 2008 Naked Pulp Viognier (Mendoza); $23. Gold in color and heavy from the beginning, this wine is full, lusty and near its final resting place. Aromas of ham, fennel, melon and mango are sweet and full, while the palate is overweight and soft, with lychee, melon and apricot flavors. Empties out quickly on the finish, and as a whole it's blowsy and ready to drink right now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.S.

86 Casa Montes 2009 Ampakama Viognier (San Juan); $10. A touch basic but also rock solid for $10. Apricot and other proper white fruit aromas get it going, and then come apple and apricot flavors. There's a slight cidery element to it, and the acid has a sheering quality, but as a whole it's nice Viognier for the price. Imported by National Refrescos Import Company, LLC. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

OTHER WHITE WINES

88 Finca Agostino 2008 Chardonnay-Viognier (Mendoza); $19. Smooth baked apple aromas work well, and the peach and vanilla side notes are equally good. Plump and easygoing on the palate, with honeyed apple and banana flavors, and then creamy on the finish, with vanilla and spice. Sweet, good and easy to enjoy. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.S.

86 Aconga 2009 Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Mendoza); $9. Not many Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay blends are coming out of Argentina, so pay attention to this acid-driven, Chenin-heavy wine with apple and white peach aromas and tart apple and clean citrus flavors. Cleansing and healthy more than complex or elevated. Imported by Winery Exchange. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

85 Zonda 2009 Chardonnay-Viognier (Mendoza); $15. Fairly neutral and waxy, with aromas of straw and fresh-cut hay followed by basic flavors of spiced apple and melon. As Viognier goes, this is regular and solid, with chunky white fruit flavors and a stalky finish. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

AUSTRALIA RED WINES

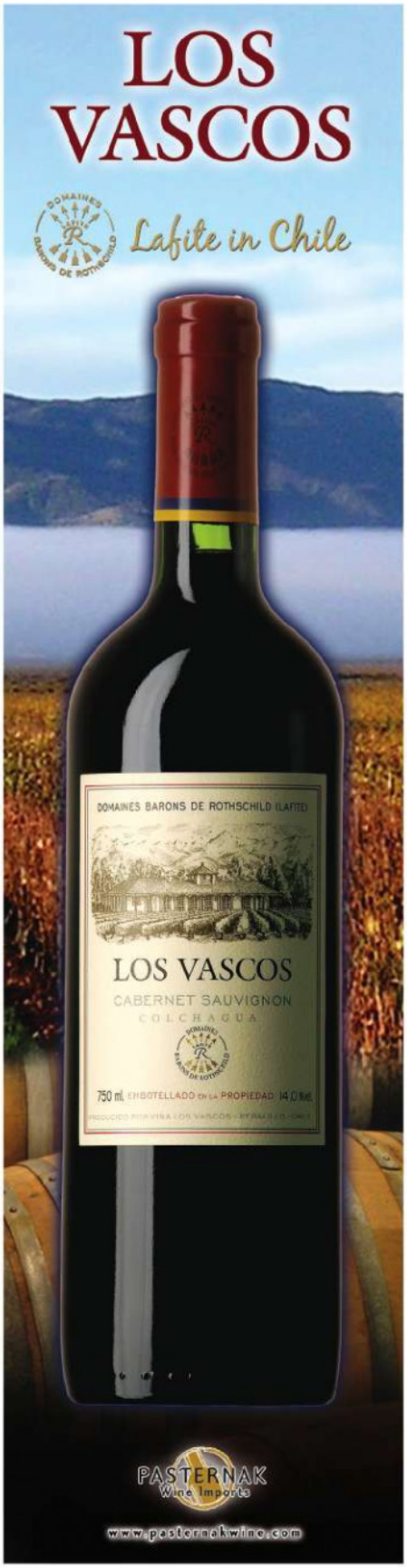
SHIRAZ

94 Hazyblur 2006 Shiraz (Kangaroo Island); $29. Perfectly manages to combine full-bodied intensity with silkiness, breadth with delineation. Peppery and meaty notes add nuance to the mixed-berry fruit, framed by hints of cedar and vanilla. Drink now–2020. Imported by Bluestone Wine Solutions. ***Editors' Choice.*** —J.C.

93 Torbreck 2006 The Struie Shiraz (Barossa); $50. A blend of Shiraz from Eden Valley and the valley floor, this is both amply endowed and impressively complex. Teh creamy purée of raspberries is dusted with peppery spice and cocoa, leaving a savory impression on the lasting finish. Drink now–2015. Imported by Torbreck. ***Editors' Choice.*** —J.C.

92 Torbreck 2006 The Factor Shiraz (Barossa Valley); $105. Old-vine Shiraz from the valley floor imparts great richness and a creamy texture to this wine's tannins, framed easily by hints of vanilla. Yet it's not a simple fruit-and-oak concoction—with time in the glass it steadily unfurls to reveal herbal and spice complexities. Marries power and elegance; drink now–2015. Imported by Torbreck. —J.C.

90 Château Tanunda 2006 Noble Baron Shiraz (Barossa); $50. Full-bodied and velvety in texture, this wine shows plenty of oak, but it's high-class oak, all cedar, spice and vanilla, wrapped around a core of cassis, with some brighter fruit tones sneaking in as well. Drink now–2015. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —J.C.



90 Razor's Edge 2008 Shiraz (McLaren Vale); $12. A terrific value if you like the style, this is an impressively concentrated, slightly syrupy Shiraz imbued with potent cassis fruit and framed with vanilla oak. Surprisingly long on the finish. Drink now. Imported by American Wine Distributors. ***Best Buy.*** —J.C.

90 Rustom Jee 2006 Sandbox Shiraz (Barossa Valley); $45. Dark and complex, with a range of aromas and flavors extending from cola and molasses to cooked fruit and peppery spice. This full-bodied and softly textured wine boasts melted tannins and a long, savory finish. Imported by Curious Vine. —J.C.

89 Chapel Hill 2008 The Parson's Nose Shiraz (McLaren Vale); $18. Full-bodied and supple in texture, this plummy Shiraz offers plenty of enjoyment at a realistic price. Vanilla and brown sugar notes frame blueberries and spice, with just a hint of bitterness apparent on the finish. Drink now–2012. Imported by Bluestone Wine Solutions. —J.C.

88 Shoofly 2008 Shiraz (South Australia); $14. Offers plenty of intensity and suppleness, but lacks a touch of freshness. Still, its dark flavors of cooked-down fruit offer enjoyment over the near term when paired with the right dish, like a savory meatloaf. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

87 West Cape Howe 2008 Zeepaard Shiraz (Western Australia); $13. Many Australian wine prices look unsustainable in the long run, but in the short run, consumers are the beneficiaries. This value-priced offering features fresh herbs, bright cherry fruit and a touch of baking spices, all in a reasonably full-bodied package. Drink now. Imported by The Country Vintner. —J.C.

85 Deakin Estate 2008 Shiraz (Victoria); $7. Not too many places in the world can turn out wine this good for such a low price. Hints of tobacco leaf add nuance to this wine's basic flavors of cherries and cranberries, and while it is not a hugely concentrated effort, it does offer complexity and drinkability. Imported by Freixenet USA. ***Best Buy.*** —J.C.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

91 Clarendon Hills 2007 Brookman Cabernet Sauvignon (Clarendon); $50. My favorite of the 07 Cabs from Clarendon Hills is this burly effort, which manages to be muscular, yet supple at the same time. Mocha, black cherry and vanilla notes combine in familiar harmony, and although this is tannic and structured, the fruit is in proper proportion. Best from 2012–2020. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. —J.C.

90 Clarendon Hills 2007 Hickinbotham Cabernet Sauvignon (Clarendon); $50. Chewy and persistent on the finish, which marks this as a candidate for the cellar, this is a richly textured Cabernet from a top McLaren Vale site. It's admittedly a bit charred in character, with hints of mocha and toast amid the cassis, but the fruit wins out in the end. Try 2015–2023. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. ***Cellar Selection.*** —J.C.

88 Mitolo 2007 Serpico Cabernet Sauvignon (McLaren Vale); $75. The partially dried grapes that are used in this wine give it an intensely aromatic and unique character that resembles cherry liqueur, with sprigs of green herbs for garnish. It's medium-bodied, with an easy, supple style that fades a bit rapidly on the finish. Imported by Vintus LLC. —J.C.

86 Clarendon Hills 2007 Sandown Cabernet Sauvignon (Clarendon); $45. This Roman Bratasiuk effort comes across as a bit raw and jagged, marked by tough tannins. Cedar and vanilla notes lead off, giving way to hints of grilled tomato, singed cherry and roasted coffee. Will it come around in 3–5 years? Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. —J.C.

86 D'Arenberg 2007 The Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon (McLaren Vale); $65. A bit austere and astringent, with vibrant cherry fruit weighed down by a full allotment of cedary oak. This medium-bodied Cabernet should be more balanced by 2014, but will likely always remain on the tough side. Best to pair it with rare beef or lamb. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

MERLOT

88 R Wines 2008 Marquis Philips Merlot (South Eastern Australia); $15. Full-bodied, lush and creamy in texture, this Merlot epitomizes the Marquis Philips style. There's a coating of charred oak, superripe fruit and plenty of size without much acid or tannin. Drink this slightly warm (16.5% abv) wine over the next 6–9 months. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

87 Yellow Tail 2008 Reserve Merlot (South Eastern Australia); $12. Merlot isn't what Australia is known for, but this is a tasty, toothsome wine at a realistic price. Delicate notes of cinnamon, clove and cocoa accent black cherries and cassis in this soft, creamy-textured effort. Drink it over the next year. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. ***Best Buy.*** —J.C.

86 Four Sisters 2008 Merlot (Central Victoria); $13. Shows some distinctly herbal notes, which gives it a welcome point of difference from other Australian Merlots in this price range. Cedar and chocolate wrap themselves around a core of tart berries, showing off a velvety texture on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Epic Wines. —J.C.

85 Tall Poppy 2007 Select Merlot (South Eastern Australia); $9. Easy to drink and easy to like, this is a soft, supple Merlot that emphasizes chocolate and cassis aromas and flavors. It doesn't have a great deal of structure, so drink it over the next several months. Imported by Simone International. ***Best Buy.*** —J.C.

BLENDED RED WINES

91 Penfolds 2007 Bin 389 Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz (South Australia); $36. The most recent release of Penfolds' "Baby Grange" is a beauty, loaded with the chocomint character that has made it famous. Dark berry and cassis take over on the creamy, lushly textured midpalate, finishing long and velvety. Drink now or hold up to 15 years. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. ***Cellar Selection.*** —J.C.

90 Dutschke 2007 Willow Bend Shiraz-Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon

(Barossa Valley); $20. A terrific value, Dutchke's Willow Bend is a round, generous blend that features complex spice elements alongside lush fruit. Cassis and blackberry notes are tinged with cocoa, cinnamon and licorice. Imported by Bluestone Wine Solutions. ***Editors' Choice.*** —J.C.

90 Henschke 2007 Henry's Seven (Barossa); $32. A harmonious blend of cherries, cedar, chocolate and mint, Henry's Seven somehow manages to be creamy in texture without carrying any excess weight--it seems almost light on its feet, lingering elegantly on the finish. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. —J.C.

87 Cascabel 2007 Tipico (McLaren Vale); $23. The intriguing blend is 50% Monastrell, 30% Grenache and 20% Shiraz, and the wine features crisp, clean notes of cherries and berries. The tannins are soft and rounded, with just a hint of smoke on the finish. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —J.C.

87 Peter Lehmann 2007 Clancy's Shiraz-Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Barossa); $16. This medium-bodied Barossa blend displays supple tannins and a silky finish, making it immediately accessible. Hints of smoke and sweat and complexity to the currant aromas and flavors. Imported by Hess Collection. —J.C.

WHITE BURGUNDY

POUILLY-FUISSÉ

92 Château de Beauregard 2008 Les Chataigniers (Pouilly-Fuissé); $50. Full and fresh, a beautifully rich wine, packed with tropical fruits, ripe apricots and a gorgeous opulent texture. Impressive. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. ***Cellar Selection.*** —R.V.

92 Daniel Barraud 2008 En Buland Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $46. Balanced, a wine that has both great fruit and sweet apple acidity. Hints of spice from wood, followed by good freshness, giving a wine that is rich and crisp. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

92 Domaine Cheveau 2008 Bouthières (Pouilly-Fuissé); $NA. Full, rounded wine, packed with rich fruits and spice. It has a honeyed edge, followed by pear juice and lime flavors. Delicious wine. Imported by Rosenthal Wine Merchants. —R.V.

91 Château de Beauregard 2008 Vers Cras (Pouilly-Fuissé); $50. Rounded and ripe, with a fine streak of fresh acidity, the wine is bright, and lively, the final taut texture giving a delicious frisson. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. —R.V.

91 Château de Fuissé 2008 Les Combettes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $57. Balanced, soft wine, keeping its freshness and acidity, rounding it out with some wood and pear juice flavors. A fine, classic wine. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

91 Daniel Barraud 2008 Alliance (Pouilly-Fuissé); $32. Full in the mouth, round and rich, the wine is finely structured, fresh and ripe at the same time. Delicious. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

91 Domaine Cordier 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $41. Full, rounded wine starring creamed apples and pink grapefruit acidity. The wine is crisp, fresh, with a firm texture and lively acidity. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

91 Pierre Vessigaud 2008 Vers Pouilly (Pouilly-Fuissé); $34. Rounded with a good texture, this is a wine that has a good future. It has weight, fruit that is fresh and well wooded showing plenty of spice and bright acidity Imported by Citadel Trading. ***Cellar Selection.*** —R.V.

91 Roger Lassarat 2008 Clos de France (Pouilly-Fuissé); $37. Ripe and soft, with a texture that is well balanced, this wine has peach and apricot flavors marrying well with the layers of wood. There is a strong, fresh element to give the wine a final lift. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —R.V.

91 Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $30. A rounded, soft wine that balances good ripe green and white fruits, fresh acidity and a light layer of wood. Finely made, worth aging. Imported by Fine Vines. ***Cellar Selection.*** —R.V.



90 Bret Brothers 2008 Les Clos Reyssie (Pouilly-Fuissé); $42. A full, rounded wine, packed with rich fruits. While it is soft, the texture is bright, crisp and delicious. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

90 Château de Fuissé 2008 Tête de Cru (Pouilly-Fuissé); $35. Caramel aromas announce a wine that is soft, rounded, with honey and butter flavors. The wine is rounded, rich. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

90 Château de Fuissé 2008 Le Clos (Pouilly-Fuissé); $57. Well structured wine with plenty of ripe fruit. The freshness of fruit is replaced by spice and peach flavors. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

90 Château de Fuissé 2008 Les Brulés (Pouilly-Fuissé); $57. Soft and creamy, with a good touch of wood, ripe apples and a line in citrus and honey. Rounded, attractive. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

90 Denis Dutron 2008 Château Vitallis Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $40. Ripe, soft, with just the right amount of fresh acidity. The wine has a bright texture, crispness, rounded out by pear flavors, topped with cream Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

90 Gilles Morat 2008 La Roche (Pouilly-Fuissé); $36. Fine and fresh, brightened by grapefruit, lemon zest and bright acidity, this is a delicious wine, ready for seafood, finishing so clean and crisp. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

90 Manuel Seguin 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $35. A smoothly textured wine, full and ripe, with great pear flavors, giving rich acidity as well as a texture that shows apricot skins and green plums Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

90 Pierre Vessigaud 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $27. Good wood, spice, ripe plum juice and balanced acidity. This is a wine with potential, balanced and rich. Imported by Citadel Trading. —R.V.

89 Domaine Barraud 2008 Sur la Roche (Pouilly-Fuissé); $28. Soft, with wood and honey flavors, white flower aromas and light acidity. The wine feels warm, rich and balanced. Imported by Latitude Wines, Inc. —R.V.

89 Domaine Cordier 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $32. Steely, mineral-textured wine, tight, with packed acidity, fresh fruit. The wine is totally crisp, with a definite mineral character. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

89 Dominique Cornin 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $30. A soft, rounded wine, feeling generous, even opulent. The acidity is there, fitting into the folds of the rich texture. Imported by Martine's Wines. —R.V.

89 Gilles Morat 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $28. Fine fresh fruits, bright with good acidity and a lively fresh character. There is a strong apple skin and grapefruit texture, finishing fresh and full. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

89 Pierre Vessigaud 2008 Vers Agnières (Pouilly-Fuissé); $30. While the wine is toasty, burnt almost, the freshness of the fruit is very present, giving a light, lively touch to the weight. Give it six months to finally integrate. Imported by Citadel Trading. —R.V.

89 Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Vignes Blanches (Pouilly-Fuissé); $36. On the fresh side, with crisp bright, lively acidity. Green fruits run well alongside apricot juice and lively vivacity. Good and attractive. Imported by Scott Paul. —R.V.

88 Bret Brothers 2008 En Carementrant (Pouilly-Fuissé); $48. While there is a somewhat meaty edge to this wine, it also has good rich texture. It probably needs time to bring out the full potential of its ripe yellow fruits. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

88 Château de Fuissé 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $57. A wine that is full in the mouth, offering some wood flavors, also some tight acidity and a final, crisp edge. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

88 Daniel Barraud 2008 Les Crays (Pouilly-Fuissé); $45. Ripe and fresh, the wine is rounded as well as bright textured. There is great crisp acidity, followed by apple skin texture and final richness Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

88 Dominique Cornin 2008 Les Chevrières (Pouilly-Fuissé); $35. Rounded, soft, but structured wine. It has some freshness, along with green plum acidity. There is a light minerality to give texture. Imported by Martine's Wines. —R.V.

88 Jean Rijckaert 2008 Les Chailloux (Pouilly-Fuissé); $46. Rich and creamy, rounded by toast and honey with some spiced fruits. The texture is more wood than fruit, needing time to evolve. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

88 Roger Luquet 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $32. Structured, with some mineral character, a wine that shows richness, vanilla from wood and final freshness. Good balance. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

88 Vins Auvigue 2008 Solutré (Pouilly-Fuissé); $22. Well-balanced, ripe, soft, hinting at minerality and fruit skin texture. Fine, fresh final acidity on a delicious wine. Imported by Diageo Chateau & Estates. —R.V.

87 Catherine et Didier Tripoz 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Pouilly-Fuissé); $26. Balanced and rich, the wine has weight, soft textures and an attractive ripe fruit character. Spice and soft mango and peach give a tropical character. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

87 Vincent 2008 Marie Antoinette (Pouilly-Fuissé); $24. A toasty, caramel aroma announce a fat, full wine, the fruit lost in all these wood flavors. The aftertaste is honey and vanilla. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

86 Domaine Ferret 2008 Hors Classe Mentrières (Pouilly-Fuissé); $60. Too much wood for a wine that is soft, very round and lacks much fruitiness. It's all spice. The wood needs time to fit with the fruit. Imported by Kobrand. —R.V.

85 Georges Duboeuf 2008 Domaine Beranger (Pouilly-Fuissé); $24. Very soft wine, with a light sense of texture. It feels fat, somewhat heavy. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —R.V.

85 Verget 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé; $30. A wine that is flat on the palate, soft, light, just showing clean apple flavors. Screwcap. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —R.V.

SAINT-VÉRAN

91 Bret Brothers 2008 Domaine la Soufrandière Climat les Quarts (Saint-Véran); $50. A great swathe of rich, well-defined fruit and a complex texture of pear and apple skins along with the freshest grapefruit and citrus character. This is an intense wine, the fruit fully in focus. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

91 Domaine Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Non Filtré (Saint-Véran); $25. A smooth and concentrated wine, very rich. Peach and nectarine fruits dominate, the acidity coming from a crisp citrus streak. The wine could benefit from another year in bottle to reveal its true intensity. Imported by J & J Importers. —R.V.

89 Collovray et Terrier 2007 Domaine des Deux Roches Vieilles Vignes (Saint-Véran); $30. Finely rounded wine, smoky wood and spice combining well with ripe yellow fruits. The acidity is rather underplayed, but all the other elements are well in place. The aftertaste shows more ripe fruit character. Imported by Dee Vine Wines. —R.V.

89 Jean Manciat 2008 Saint-Véran; $27. A piercingly citrus wine, the fruit as fresh as can be, rounded by the wood aging. There is a really bright character here that is appetizing and fresh. Imported by Louis Dressner Selections. —R.V.

89 Roger Lassarat 2008 Cuvée Prestige (Saint-Véran); $24. From parcels of old vines, a smooth, wood- influenced wine. Flavors of ripe yellow fruits emerge from the vanilla toast character. It is rich, velvet textured, feeling opulent. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —R.V.

88 Jean Rijckaert 2008 En Avonnes (Saint-Véran); $35. Very forward fruit, mixing well with toast to give a wine that is rich and full-bodied. There is a delicious green, juicy fruit element to balance the toast. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

88 Vignerons des Terres Secrètes 2008 Les Trois Pêcheurs (Saint-Véran); $18. Rich and round, the wine boasts ripe toast and creamy pear and peach fruit. The lemon touches give point to this full wine, adding attractive freshness. Imported by HB Wine Merchants. —R.V.

87 Bret Brothers 2008 Climat la Côte Rôtie (Saint-Véran); $44. On the bright and crisp side, this is a lively, fresh wine, mingling green fruits with toast and a more opulent richness. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

87 Dominique Cornin 2008 Saint-Véran; $24. Crisply citrus with vibrant bright acidity, this is a light and fresh wine, just with some caramel character. Imported by Martine's Wines. —R.V.

87 Verget 2008 Le Clos (Saint-Véran); $28. Lemon-crisp wine, a light creamy apple purée and a green plum skin texture all give a deliciously light and poised wine. Screwcap. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —R.V.

86 Collovray et Terrier 2008 Tradition (Saint-Véran); $24. Light and fresh, with a good crisp texture, green apples and plums, along with a linear structure. The wine is bright and crisp. Imported by Cynthia Hurley Wine Imports. —R.V.

85 Domaine Cordier 2008 En Faux (Saint-Véran); $30. Rich and wood dominated, where the spice is much more prominent than the fruit. The texture, though, is rounded and fat, with only a hint of tight acidity. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

85 Georges Duboeuf 2008 Saint-Véran; $16. Sweet and rich fruit, an attractive honey and toast flavor give this dry wine good softness. There is weight that brings out the ripe, creamy and warm texture. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —R.V.



85 Jean Rijckaert 2008 En Faux (Saint-Véran); $33. Very broad wine, with ripe fruit, a flavor of currants and pink grapefruit. There is an edgy texture here, the wine finishing crisply. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

85 Joseph Drouhin 2008 Saint-Véran; $17. Full-bodied and ripe, this is an easy, open wine with flavors of peaches, nectarines, a touch of wood and a definite citrus element. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —R.V.

OTHER MACONNAIS

90 Domaine Guillemot-Michel 2008 Quintaine (Mâcon-Villages); $33. This 16–acre estate is run biodynamically, producing intensely flavored, honeyed, ripe wines. This is succulent from ripe fruit, with the acidity bright and vivid, finishing with sweet pineapple and apricot flavors. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —R.V.

90 Jean Manciat 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Mâcon-Charnay); $28. Well-balanced wine, ripe fruit, touches of wood, light spice, ginger and sweet apples. Structured, held well together by wood. Imported by Louis Dressner Selections. —R.V.

90 Jean Rijckaert 2008 Epinet (Viré-Clessé); $30. Rich, smooth, ripe flavors of wood with some pear and peach juice. Soft, but with good depth of flavor. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

90 Manuel Seguin 2008 Viré-Clessé; $18. Rich wine, full in the mouth, bringing wood and ripe apple flavors well together. Delicious. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

89 Domaine de la Garenne 2008 Mâcon-Azé; $18. Some fine wood and fruit aromas are followed by fresh grapefruit, pear and bright lemon flavors. The whole is held together by a fine touch of honeyed wood. Imported by Southern Wine and Spirits. —R.V.

89 Domaine des Comtes Lafon 2008 Uchizy-les-Maranches (Mâcon-Villages); $NA. Very soft fruit, with lovely ripe flavors, this white-fruited wine brings delicious white pear flavors highlighted by citrus flashes. Already very attractive. Imported by Beaune Imports. —R.V.

89 Jean Manciat 2008 Franclieu (Mâcon-Charnay); $24. Rounded, rich wine, the wood element important, but keeping the fresh fruit character and the ripe apple and pear juice flavors, finishing with honey. Imported by Louis Dressner Selections. —R.V.

89 Jean Rijckaert 2008 Cray vers Vaux (Mâcon-Lugny); $35. Swathes of ripe fruit over a broad layer of wood, a generous, opulent character, ripe, the spice from wood giving a good, rich final character. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

89 Louis Latour 2008 Genievres (Mâcon-Lugny); $16. Big, bold wine, ripe fruits pushed forward by wood, some spice, rich in character. This is lush Chardonnay, but with a good mineral edge. Imported by Louis Latour Inc. —R.V.

89 Verget 2008 Viré-Clessé; $25. Very fresh, pushed through with acidity, green fruits, with good depth of flavor, the crispness sustained by creamy wood. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —R.V.

88 Bret Brothers 2008 Domaine la Soufrandière (Pouilly-Vinzelles); $35. Really toasty, honey and lemon style of Chardonnay, tight and crisp. There are plenty of green plum and grapefruit flavors. Deliciously crisp, while also ripe. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

88 Collovray et Terrier 2008 Domaine des Deux Roches Plants Carré (Mâcon-Villages); $21. Rich, rounded wine showing delicious sweet pear and apricot flavors with a touch of white fig. Well balanced. Imported by Dee Vine Wines. —R.V.

88 Nicolas Maillet 2008 Mâcon-Villages; $23. A wine that seems designed for some aging, with youthful green fruits, a vibrant texture of apple juice and good depth of flavor. Imported by Belle Epoque Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Verget 2008 Clos Saint-Pierre (Mâcon-Charnay); $23. Ripe, full-bodied wine, the fresh white currant and pear fruits layered with wood. The wine is bright with good concentration. Screwcap. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —R.V.

87 Domaine Talmard 2008 Mâcon-Chardonnay; $14. Balanced, full wine, spiced with sweet fruit, ripe pears and a fine texture of peach skin. Great fruit, well sustained by wood. Screwcap. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. —R.V.

87 Nicolas Maillet 2008 Le Chemin Blanc (Mâcon-Verze); $30. Well structured, ripe fruit, the acidity balanced with a fine texture of bright apple skins. Good, attractive. Imported by Belle Epoque Wine Imports. —R.V.

87 Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Mâcon-Fuissé; $20. Textured wine, showing crisp citrus along with green herbs, some spice and a delicious juicy final taste. Imported by Fine Vines. —R.V.

87 Vignerons des Terres Secrètes 2008 Domaine Michel Barraud les Pierres Dorées (Mâcon-Villages); $15. Full, balanced wine, the fresh yellow fruit skins working with lime zest and a light vanilla character. The aftertaste is soft, toasty. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

87 Vignerons des Terres Secrètes 2008 Les Grands Cheneaux (Mâcon-Verze); $14. Open, generous wine, the fruits showing round, white peach flavors dominant, with a crispening of lemon zest. Imported by HB Wine Merchants. —R.V.

86 Bret Brothers 2008 Terroir du Mâconnais (Mâcon-Villages); $41. A finely textured, balanced wine, with apple skin flavors followed by quince and perfumed herbs and lemon zest. Give it 12 months Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

86 Colin Bourisset 2008 Les Burdiners (Mâcon-Villages); $13. Indistinct texture, crispness combined with a lightly toasty character. The wine is crisp, has a fruit skin texture finishing with a touch of caramel. Imported by Metrowine Distribution. —R.V.

86 Domaine Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Pouilly-Vinzelles; $28. Big, bold wine, packed with toast and rich fruits. There is a

definite tropical element here, the texture rich and smooth. Imported by Scott Paul. —R.V.

86 Georges Duboeuf 2008 Mâcon-Villages; $12. Balanced, ripe pear and quince flavors, a creamy texture with light toast. Fine, rich wine. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —R.V.

86 Thibert Père et Fils 2008 En Chailloux (Mâcon-Prissé); $20. Textured wine, packed with tight citrus flavors, full in the mouth, needing a few months to soften. Good potential from the weight. Imported by Scott Paul. —R.V.

86 Verget 2008 Mâcon-Villages; $20. A soft, open, balanced wine, attractive flavors of lemon and pink grapefruit and a texture of green herbs, with light toast. Good concentration as well, bringing in creamy pear and peach flavors Screwcap. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —R.V.

85 Domaine Cordier 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Viré-Clessé); $25. Wood and caramel aromas emerge, the wood following through to the honeyed, toasty palate. The wine leaves a burnt, smoky final taste. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

85 Domaine Cordier 2008 Mâcon-Fuissé; $20. Toasty aromas, followed by a wine whose acidity is from wood rather than fruit. It is too toasty, smoky, burnt. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

85 Domaine Cordier 2008 Mâcon; $20. Some weight, a creamy-textured wine, showing some ripe pear and lime-fruits. Fresh, full in the mouth. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

85 Domaine Thibert Père et Fils 2008 Les Longeays (Pouilly-Vinzelles); $25. Fat and feeling rather heavy, this is a rich style of Chardonnay, perhaps too much for the light fruit. It does have a mineral character that gives some final structure. Imported by Fine Vines. —R.V.

85 Jean Rijckaert 2008 En Pottes (Mâcon-Montbellet); $35. Shows toast and smooth caramel, but also good green fruit flavors that give the whole wine a fine lift. Delicious food-style wine. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

ITALY WHITE WINES

PINOT GRIGIO

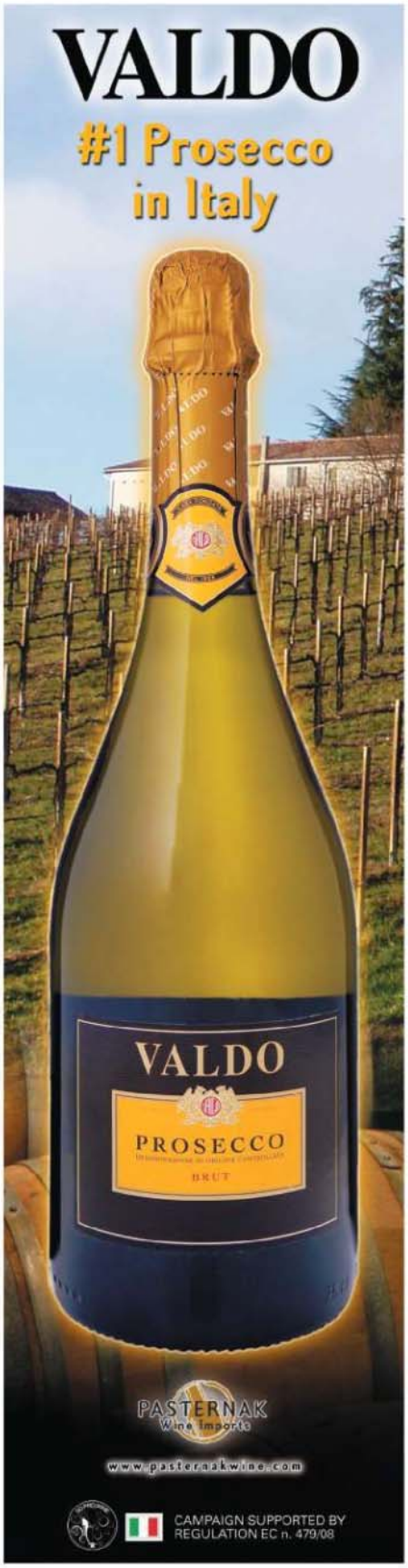
91 Marco Felluga 2007 Mongris Riserva Pinot Grigio (Collio); $30. Here's a gorgeous Riserva expression of Pinot Grigio with a creamy, dense mouthfeel and prominent aromas of peach cream, apricot, almond paste and honey. Those yellow fruit flavors last long on the palate and would pair with shellfish or white meat. Very nice. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

90 Cantina Nals Margreid 2009 Punggl Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $22. Punggl is a very expressive Pinot Grigio (one third of the wine is aged in large oak casks) that imparts fruity tones of peach and melon along with some spicier tones of pastry cream and vanilla. It shows good structure and silkiness in the mouth. Imported by The Country Vintner. —M.L.

90 Ronco del Gelso 2008 Sot Lis Rivis Pinot Grigio (Friuli Isonzo); $24. The 2008 vintage has produced a beautiful edition of this elegantly oak-aged Pinot Grigio. This is a refined and elegant wine that shows excellent fruit and careful winery work. It's fragrant and creamy with aromas of apricot, citrus, white almond and honey. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

90 St. Pauls 2009 Egg Leiten Exclusiv Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $24. This bright and sophisticated Pinot Grigio offers unique richness and complexity of aromas. The wine is creamy and generous on the palate and would pair well with shellfish or creamy shrimp risotto. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

89 Kellerei Kaltern Caldaro 2009 Söll Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $28. Twenty percent of this Pinot Grigio sees contact with wood barrels to produce a creamy, rich texture in the mouth. Aromas here include apricot, peach, cantaloupe melon and honey roasted almonds. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.



89 San Michele Eppan 2008 Sanct Valentin Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $34. Here's a sophisticated interpretation of Pinot Grigio with a light golden hue and soft shadings of citrus, passion fruit, peach and almond paste. Fine aromas give the wine a lively, cheerful personality. A richly textured mouthfeel makes the wine last long on the palate. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.

89 Tramin 2009 Unterebner Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $31. If you like aromatic expressions of Pinot Grigio, look for a wine from the Alto Adige appellation like this wine from Tramin. Cool-climate winemaking tends to add layers of peach and almond blossom beyond characteristic aromas of apple and pear. The mouthfeel here is creamy and rich. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

88 Abbazia di Novacella 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $22. This is a successful expression of Pinot Grigio thanks to the wine's easy but studied sophistication and its creamy mouthfeel. Food-friendly and upfront, it would make a good match to seafood or white meat. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Cantina Nals Margreid 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $17. Fish, lightly grilled chicken and pasta would all work perfectly with this food friendly Pinot Grigio. Aromas here include peach, citrus, vanilla bean and almond. Imported by The Country Vintner. —M.L.

88 Colterenzio 2009 Puiten Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $24. Puiten is a slightly wider and creamier expression compared to the estate's base Pinot Grigio. The wine shows pretty aromas of peach and citrus as well as a very thick and succulent feel in the mouth. Imported by Grappoli Imports. —M.L.

88 Elena Walch 2009 Castel Ringberg Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $25. This is a lovely Pinot Grigio with fruit aromas, floral notes and minerality that all blend together as one. The wine is fresh and clean and would pair with shellfish or even oysters. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —M.L.

88 Erste Neue 2009 Grauer Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $29. This is a very successful (from packaging to content) expression of Pinot Grigio from cool-climate northern Italy that offers pretty aromas of honey, peach and citrus. It tastes full and creamy on the close but also delivers refreshing crispness at the end. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. —M.L.

88 Jermann 2009 Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $27. Here's a full-bodied Pinot Grigio with pretty aromatic layers of peach, citrus and honeydew melon that are presented over a polished, fresh mouthfeel. Try this delicious wine with spicy Thai or Indian dishes. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

88 Livio Felluga 2009 Pinot Grigio (Colli Orientali del Friuli); $24. Livio Felluga's Pinot Grigio is distinguished by a thick, creamy mouthfeel and abundant aromas of peach, wild flower and vanilla cream. The wine is clean and pristine, yet structured and smooth at the same time. Very nice. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.L.

88 Marco Felluga 2009 Mongris Pinot Grigio (Collio); $18. Surprising density and smoothness characterizes this structured Pinot Grigio. The wine is redolent of peach, melon and mature grapefruit with a touch of nutty almond on the close. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

88 Mario Schiopetto 2007 Pinot Grigio (Collio); $31. Here's a layered and sophisticated Pinot Grigio with aromas of white mineral, peach, pear and delicate overtones of baked bread and roasted almond. All this is backed by natural creaminess and richness that would pair beautifully with swordfish steak or chopped tuna tartare. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.L.

88 Maso Canali 2009 Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $23. Here's a very successful and aromatic Pinot Grigio from cool-climate Trentino in northern Italy. A small percentage of the grapes undergo air-drying (appassimento) for extra heft and richness on the finish. Aromas include apricot, tropical fruit and a touch of white almond. Imported by Maso Canali. —M.L.

88 Maso Poli 2009 Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $22. There's a lot going on in the glass here. This luminous Pinot Grigio offers a beautifully perfumed bouquet as well as structure and staying power. A small percentage of the wine is aged in oak and this adds density and complexity. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Mezzacorona 2008 Riserva Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $13. There's a really nice, creamy feel to this wine as it moves smoothly across the palate. As it does, the wine imparts lasting flavors of apricot, honey and Golden Delicious apple. There's a touch of almond spice too and you can't beat this low price. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

88 Plozner 2009 Malpelo Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $20. This pretty ramato style Pinot Grigio ("ramato" refers to the copperish color you see here) delivers clean aromas of citrus, pomegranate, white cherry and a touch of cinnamon spice. Pair this wine with crab cakes or grilled Ahi tuna. Imported by Vedi Wines. —M.L.

88 St. Pauls 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $18. Also known as Ruländer in the bilingual Italian-German Alto Adige area, this crisp Pinot Grigio offers a very aromatic interpretation with bright tones of honey, citrus, peach and passion fruit. Textured and compact, it washes clean over the palate. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

88 Valter Scarbolo 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $17. There's a nutty, toasted element to the bouquet that is followed by mature melon and stone fruit. This wine is luscious and creamy and shows very nice density on the close. This is a clear step above your standard Grigio. Imported by Dark Star Cellars. —M.L.

88 Valter Scarbolo 2008 XL Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $22. This is a lovely Pinot Grigio "ramato" (with a copperish color) that shows strong aromas of white cherry, cranberry and pink rose. It's smooth and creamy in the mouth and although the alcohol is high, it is well integrated. Imported by Dark Star Imports. ***Editors' Choice.*** —M.L.

87 Andriano 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $21. From the Andriano line of Alto Adige's cooperative, Cantina Terlano, this attractively aromatic Pinot Grigio presents tones of stone fruit, white mineral and loads of fresh apricot. Pair this wine with vegetarian Indian dishes. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

87 Attems 2009 Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $19. This light and buoyant Pinot Grigio from the Frescobaldi Attems property in northeast Italy delivers fresh aromas of peach, melon, apricot and honey. The wine is thick and creamy on the close and offers piquant freshness on the end. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

87 Cantina Terlano 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $22. Located in the cool, mountainous region of Alto Adige in the far north of Italy, Cantina Terlano boasts one of Italy's finest lines of crisp white wines. Albeit more informal, this luminous and fresh Pinot Grigio offers pristine aromas of stone fruit and citrus. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

87 Castello Banfi 2009 San Angelo Pinot Grigio (Toscana); $17. Castello Banfi's Tuscan take on the popular Pinot Grigio grape always delivers good cheer and a sunny disposition. Mature notes of peach, melon and grapefruit give the wine dimension and personality. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

87 Colterenzio 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $20. Balanced and deeply aromatic, this luminous Pinot Grigio from Alto Adige delivers aromatic tones of stone fruit, honeysuckle and citrus. The wine is smooth and tonic with a nicely silky feel on the close. Imported by Grappoli Imports. —M.L.

87 Concilio 2009 Contessa Manci Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $16. Contessa Manci shows slightly more structure and staying power than Concilio's base Pinot Grigio. This is a fresh and luminous white wine with ripe aromas of stone fruit and cantaloupe melon. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

87 Conti Formentini 2009 Pinot Grigio (Collio); $18. Here is a nicely executed Pinot Grigio with a slightly bigger, more succulent style than your standard Pinot Grigio. Mature fruit aromas of peach, honey and melon make for a nice balance against the wine's natural freshness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

87 Erste Neue 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $20. Clean and crystalline, this bright Pinot Grigio offers aromas pristine aromas of stone fruit, peach, citrus and mineral. It's fresh, tonic and would pair with oven-roasted tomatoes stuffed with ricotta and oregano. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. —M.L.

87 Gaierhof 2009 Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $20. This is a down to earth and seriously enjoyable Pinot Grigio with fresh aromas of citrus, peach and passion fruit. It's easy going and clean but those cool-climate aromas give it an extra boost of intensity and charm. Imported by The Country Vintner. —M.L.

87 Kellerei Kaltern Caldaro 2009 Dolomiti Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $15. Pinot Grigio, also known as Ruländer in the bilingual German-Italian region of Alto



Adige, shows fragrant notes of honeysuckle and cantaloupe melon here. The wine is pristine, tonic and very refreshing in the mouth. Nicely done. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

87 La Vis 2009 Ritratti Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $17. Ritratti offers an elegant Pinot Grigio with bright luminosity and pretty aromas of peach, apricot, pear and citrus. There's nice richness here and the wine glides smoothly over the palate thanks to its rich consistency. Imported by F&F Fine Wines International. —M.L.

87 Le Due Torri 2009 Vigneto le Cocce Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $15. This is a very successful expression of Pinot Grigio that offers just the right level of structure and aromatic intensity against freshness and overall crispness. You'll get aromas of peach, citrus and mature pear. Imported by Ambiente Wine Importing. —M.L.

87 Mezzacorona 2009 Pinot Grigio (Vigneti delle Dolomiti); $9. The quality-price ratio here is simply unbeatable. Mezzacorona presents a fuller, rounder, more satisfying Pinot Grigio with ripe aromas of peach, pear and honey. There's a smooth, creamy feel in the mouth. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

87 Niedermayr Josef 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $20. Bright aromas of Granny Smith apple, green fruit, melon and honey emerge from the nose of this fragrant expression of Pinot Grigio. It is creamy and textured in the mouth with a touch of smooth almond paste on the close. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.L.

87 Pighin 2009 Pinot Grigio (Collio); $22. Easy to drink and perfect for serving at outdoor lunches, this no-fuss Pinot Grigio opens with fresh notes of citrus, exotic fruit, pear and peach. The wine is characterized in the mouth by a fruity, clean feel. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

87 Plozner 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $15. A drying mineral tone slices through the center of this luminous Pinot Grigio and adds a pretty edge to aromas of peach, citrus and pear. It also wins points in the mouth thanks to its tonic, fresh fruit flavors. Imported by Vedi Wines. ***Editors' Choice.*** —M.L.

87 Russiz Superiore 2009 Pinot Grigio (Collio); $24. Here's an exciting and well crafted Pinot Grigio with nice heft and density in the mouth followed by bright flavors of citrus, peach, pineapple and pear. The wine offers intensity and a creamy texture that would work with seafood or white meat. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

87 San Michele Eppan 2009 Anger Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $19. This is an excellent and truly enjoyable wine. cool-climate Alto Adige helps shape pristine aromas of citrus, lemongrass, yellow fruit and honey. Delicate aging in large oak brings almond and cream. It's a crisp, refreshing wine that would pair with most vegetable or seafood dishes. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.

87 Tenuta Luisa 2009 Pinot Grigio (Isonzo del Friuli); $21. Here is a very successful interpretation of Pinot Grigio with loads of aromatic intensity, stone fruit, nectarine, honeysuckle and yellow rose. The wine is smooth and creamy on the palate and offers long lasting fruit flavors. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

87 Tolloy 2009 Pinot Grigio (Vigneti delle Dolomiti); $13. Tolloy brings us a bright and luminous Pinot Grigio with a very attractive price tag. You'll recognize aromas of citrus, peach, passion fruit and kiwi and the wine would pair with tuna or curry chicken salad. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. —M.L.

87 Tommasi 2009 Il Grigio Ramato Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $16. "Ramato," or copper-colored Pinot Grigios like this, are becoming steadily popular. You get the best of Pinot Grigio in what is basically a rosé wine. Aromas here include slight shadings of cranberry and pomegranate seed, but the largest component of the bouquet focuses on white wine aromas of stone fruit and citrus. Imported by Rolar. —M.L.

87 Vigneti Villabella 2009 Vigna di Pesina Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $16. This is a very interesting Pinot Grigio with a unique aromatic profile that includes a green note of chopped herbs or crushed white pepper. There are pretty fruit notes too and the wine is silky and crisp on the close. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

87 Villa Russiz 2008 Pinot Grigio (Collio); $33. This Pinot Grigio is distinguished by good structure and strong alcohol. The wine delivers aromas of stone fruit, lemon zest and honeydew melon and all this fruit freshness is backed by a smooth, warming texture. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

87 Vivallis 2009 Saxophone Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $15. Saxophone Pinot Grigio offers very nice aromatic intensity with notes of peach, apricot, wild flowers and pink grapefruit. There's also a soft creaminess at the back that recalls white almond or vanilla pastry cream. Imported by Solstars Inc. ***Editors' Choice.*** —M.L.

87 Volpe Pasini 2008 Grivò Pinot Grigio (Colli Orientali del Friuli); $17. There's a natural creaminess to this wine that helps elevate aromas of peach nectar, apricot and honey. The mouthfeel is smooth and silky and imparts lasting citrus notes on the close. Imported by Vinity Wine Company. —M.L.

86 Albino Armani 2009 Corvara Pinot Grigio (Valdadige); $20. Here's your quintessential food wine with aromas of lemon zest, mature peach, talc power, pear and pineapple. International markets adore Pinot Grigio precisely because it is easy to drink and it always leaves the palate refreshed. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —M.L.

86 Alois Lageder 2009 Riff Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $10. Riff is a fun and informal Pinot Grigio that shows lively aromas of citrus and passion fruit, backed by cheerful tones of green mango and lime. It's a light, clean and fresh white wine. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

86 Altanuta 2009 Pinot Grigio (Valdadige); $18. There's a fresh, vibrant quality to this luminous Pinot Grigio that makes it fun and easy to drink. Aromas of peach, pear and grapefruit would work nicely next to grilled fish or steamed vegetables. The wine is crisp and clean with loads of citrus. Imported by Total Beverage Solution. —M.L.

86 Bollini 2009 Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $14. Bollini Pinot Grigio can be counted on as a steady and consistent white wine to drink on weeknights at home with family and friends. There are nice aromatic ele-

ments here—citrus, pear and passion fruit—that come together as a whole. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

86 Ca' Montini 2009 L'Aristocratico Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $16. Presented in a tall, elongated bottle Ca' Montini's Pinot Grigio is citrus-driven with fresh acidity and a nicely compact feel in the mouth. You'll recognize mineral notes and green fruit notes of kiwi and Granny Smith apple. Imported by A.V. Brands. —M.L.

86 Castellargo 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $20. White peach, rose petal, chopped almonds and grapefruit come forward on the nose of this easy Pinot Grigio. The wine delivers a tight, tonic feel in the mouth and would pair with Indian or Chinese food. Imported by Old Bridge Inc. —M.L.

86 Cesari 2009 DueTorri Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. This easy going wine (now packaged in a screw-cap bottle) offers fresh and bright tones of citrus, lime, passion fruit and pear. It's upfront and informal and would make a crisp companion to tapas or fried finger foods. Imported by Siena Imports. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

86 Cescon Italo Storia e Vini 2008 Il Tralcetto Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $12. Embellished with very organic-looking packaging (complete with a small vine cutting attached to the bottle) this bright Pinot Grigio offers clean aromas of peach blossom and citrus zest. Pair it with a tuna melt. Imported by Bacco Wine & Spirit, LLC. —M.L.

86 Cescon Italo Storia e Vini 2009 Il Tralcetto Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $12. Packaged with a little vine cutting tied to the neck of the bottle, this fun Pinot Grigio adds a lot of personality and charm to the table. The wine is redolent of citrus, peach and white mineral. It's fresh and crisp on the close. Imported by Bacco Wine & Spirit, LLC. —M.L.

86 Concilio 2009 Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $12. Concilio offers a surprisingly floral expression of Pinot Grigio with aromas of honeysuckle, jasmine, mineral, peach and citrus. The aromatic intensity wins points here and the wine taste fresh and clean on the close. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

86 La Vis 2009 Simboli Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $10. The Simboli line from Gruppo La-Vis offers good value and quality to match. This luminous Pinot Grigio is redolent of peach blossom, pink grapefruit, pear and apple. It's light, crisp and lively on the close. Imported by F&F Fine Wines International. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

86 Lechthaler 2009 Drago Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $17. Drago is a crisp and fundamentally fresh white wine that would pair with fish dishes or vegetable appetizers. Aromas here include white mineral, peach and citrus and there's a touch of sweet fruit on the close. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Palmadina 2008 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Isonzo); $12. Light and fresh, floral and peachy; this is textbook Pinot Grigio that delivers all the easy drinkability you require from an informal, affordable wine like this. You can pair it with fresh summer foods and salads. Imported by Vinarium Inc. —M.L.



THE LAND OF A THOUSAND WINES

Of all the world's great wine regions, Rioja is the most varied in terroir offering an extraordinary range of wines. From the awe-inspiring Sierra Cantabria mountains to the fertile Ebro River valley, to the harsh terrain of the Calahorra region, you'll find luscious reds, fruity young wines, refreshing rosés and crisp whites. The wines of the Alta, Alavesa and Baja regions match every style, taste and pricepoint and are considered the greatest of food wines. Rioja is the land of a thousand wines. Visit **vibrantrioja.com** and learn why Rioja is pure genius.

VIBRANT
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86 Pighin 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $14. Fresh, bright and easy to drink, Pighin presents the kind of Pinot Grigio you can serve with appetizers or during informal salad lunches. There is good crispness and medium consistency on the close. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

86 Pitars 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $14. This is a bright and luminous Pinot Grigio with loads of lemon zest, stone fruit and grapefruit aromas. Friuli white wines are characterized by nice smoothness on the palate and this wine definitely shows that quality. Imported by Great Sunsan Wine Imports. —M.L.

86 Pizzolato 2009 Terra Summa Pinot Grigio (Piave); $16. Made with organically farmed grapes, this bright Pinot Grigio delivers aromas of dried hay, stone fruit and a dusting of white mineral. The wine ends with a spicy touch of crispness. Imported by Natural Merchants LLC. —M.L.

86 Santi 2009 Sortesele Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $15. When shopping for Pinot Grigio, the Delle Venezie appellation should tip you off to easy-drinking, affordable wines. This expression is no exception and you will encounter aromas of lemon, pear and peach. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

86 Teresa Raiz 2009 Pinot Grigio (Colli Orientali del Friuli); $17. Paolo Tosolini is an enthusiastic and hardworking winemaker who takes steady care with his Pinot Grigios year after year. This expression is fruity and light and there's a piquant touch of cleansing acidity on the close. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

86 Tommasi 2009 Le Rosse Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $16. Le Rosse is a light and informal Pinot Grigio from northeast Italy that delivers an easy, fresh drinking experience. You'll recognize aromas of citrus, stone fruit and there's a touch of dried hay at the end. Imported by Rolar. —M.L.

86 Torre di Luna 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $14. If you are looking for a really good, refreshing Pinot Grigio at an attractively low price. This is your wine. Informal and friendly, it delivers on all points. The bouquet is fruity and tight and the mouthfeel is dense enough to pair with easy foods. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Tramin 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $15. Packaged in an easy screw-cap bottle, this fresh Italian Pinot Grigio would work beautifully with fried calamari or zucchini flowers stuffed with mozzarella. The wine is compact and lean with tones of stone fruit and citrus. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Villa Rubini 2009 Pinot Grigio (Colli Orientali del Friuli); $15. Fresh aromas of stone fruit, cut grass and lemon zest emerge from the bouquet of this luminous Pinot Grigio. The wine is fresh and easy on the close and would pair with tomato and basil bruschetta. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

86 Zenato 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. Zenato's bright, easy-going Pinot Grigio is slightly soft in the mouth and is enhanced by floral aromas, stone fruit and citrus. Pair this wine with seafood, tuna or chicken salad. Imported by Winebow. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Adria Vini 2009 Rapido White Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $9. A cheerful Pinot Grigio, Rapido white offers a zesty, clean feel with simple aromas of peach and citrus. But the low price is one of the best things about it. Imported by Vias Imports. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Bella Sera 2009 Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $7. No doubt this is a simple wine, but it's zippy freshness and overall informality wins it points. You can't go wrong here: the wine is clean, tonic and drinks ever so easily, sip after refreshing sip. A small percentage of Chardonnay is added for extra creaminess. Imported by Bella Sera USA. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Blason 2009 Casa in Bruma n. 23 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Isonzo); $13. This is a thin and fresh Pinot Grigio with a bright, luminous appearance and tonic aromas of citrus, stone fruit and kiwi. It's an easy, informal wine to pair with tuna or chicken salad. Imported by Premier Wine Co. —M.L.

85 Cabert 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $11. Light grassy tones followed by citrus and drying mineral characterize the bouquet of this luminous Pinot Grigio. It's an easy, tonic wine that would pair with all light summer or low calorie foods. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —M.L.

85 Cantine Lenotti di Lenotti 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $12. Friendly and approachable, this luminous and compact Pinot Grigio would make an informal dinner companion to fried fish sticks or Chinese take-out. Aromas here include citrus, pear and a touch of sweet almond paste. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

85 Cantine Volpi 2009 Trefili Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $10. Made with organically grown grapes, this luminous Pinot Grigio offers crisp aromas of citrus and stone fruit. It's not a complex or sophisticated wine, nor is it meant to be. Enjoy it as an easy-drinking, refreshing Italian white. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

85 Caposaldo 2009 Pinot Grigio (Veneto); $10. This is a bright, affordable Pinot Grigio that offers pristine aromas of passion fruit, citrus and green fruit. There's zesty spice on the crisp close and the wine keeps the palate very refreshed. Imported by Kobrand. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Conte Brandolini 2009 D'Adda Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $15. Peach, lemon zest, white mineral and pear appear on the nose of this luminous Pinot Grigio. It's crisp and clean in the mouth and would pair with cocktail sandwiches or ham and cheese appetizers. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

85 Di Lenardo 2009 Dal Vigneto Vigne dai Vieris Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $10. A vineyard-select Pinot Grigio, this refreshing wine offers a bouquet of stone fruit, white mineral and zesty lemon rind. It has an easy, lean feel in the mouth and is very refreshing nonetheless. Imported by Carolina Wine Co. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2009 Pinot Grigio (Sicilia); $9. Here's a Pinot Grigio that benefits from the strong Sicilian sun to produce aromas of mature melon, honey and pear. It's an easy wine, with a clean and crisp mouthfeel that would word with pasta or rice salads. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Giovello 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. Inviting aromas of peach, citrus, white stone and wild flowers open the bouquet of this light and luminous Pinot Grigio. The wine is simple, easy drinking and should be served very chilled. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports. —M.L.

85 Kysela 2009 Cortenova Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $14. Here's your standard Pinot Grigio with a lean, compact texture and bright aromas of citrus, pear, peach and lime. It's an informal, easy-drinking wine that would be great, served chilled, at cocktail hour. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.L.

85 La di Motte 2009 Pinot Grigio (Piave); $15. Here is an informal and light white wine (made from the popular Pinot Grigio grape) with a thin but crisp mouthfeel and aromas of ripe peach and melon. This expression from the Piave territory of northern Italy shows more mature fruit and a slightly sweet, honey aftertaste. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

85 La Vis 2009 Storie di Vite Pinot Grigio (Trentino); $10. Set at an attractively low price, this fresh Pinot Grigio offers cooling aromas of passion fruit, peach and honeydew melon. It's an easy wine with a lean mouthfeel that would taste great on a hot day spent outdoors. Imported by F&F Fine Wines International. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Lagaria 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $10. Here's an easy, hay-colored Pinot Grigio with no-fuss aromas of citrus, grapefruit and a touch of cut grass. It's a crisp, refreshing wine that would wash down well with steamed mussels with garlic and parsley. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Le Due Torri 2009 Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $10. Easy, fresh and well-priced, this luminous Pinot Grigio would pair with appetizers or cheese platters. The wine shows bright aromas of citrus, pear and peach and there's a spicy, zesty tone on the close. Imported by Ambiente Wine Importing. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Mont'Albano 2009 Verdissimo Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $10.





Here's a light style, easy-going Pinot Grigio. The wine is refreshing and crisp and would pair with vegetables, seafood or potato salad. Aromas include peach, pear and citrus. Imported by Banfi Vintners. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 Primosic 2008 Poderi di Carlo Pinot Grigio (Collio); $15. This refreshing Pinot Grigio from Northeast Italy offers an interesting bouquet that includes elements of flower, peach, natural rubber and a distant note of smoke or dusty mineral. In the mouth, the wine is light, fresh and zesty. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.L.

85 Ruffino 2009 Lumina Pinot Grigio (Venezia Giulia); $10. The price has come down on Ruffino's Lumina this year, and this is great news for consumers. This expression of Pinot Grigio pushes all the usual buttons: the wine is compact, luminous and redolent of citrus, pear and peach. Imported by Constellation Wines U.S.. ***Best Buy.*** —M.L.

85 San Michele Eppan 2009 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige); $16. From the Classico line of this co-operative winery in northern Italy, here is a fresh and nicely aromatic expression of Pinot Grigio. You'll recognize tones of Golden Delicious apple, pear and zesty citrus. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.

85 San Simone 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $15. Here's your quintessential, easy-drinking Italian white with a crisp personality and clean aromas of citrus, white mineral, stone fruit and pear. It's a thin, open and refreshing alternative. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

85 Sartori 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. This is an informal, cheerful Pinot Grigio—an excellent value at this low price—that starts off with aromas of citrus, peach blossom and pear. In the mouth, the wine is lean, crisp and refreshing. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

85 Tenuta Cà Bolani 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Aquileia); $17. From the important Zonin estate in northeast Italy, this fresh, clean Pinot Grigio offers a light, informal drinking experience. Citrus, pear and peach come to the nose and would pair nicely with smoked salmon on crackers. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

85 Vigneti Villabella 2009 Via Veneto La Corona Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. There's a distinct citrus note here that adds a layer of freshness over aromas of peach, pear and melon. In fact, 5% Sauvignon Blanc is added for extra fragrance. The wine is pleasantly tart and zesty on the close and would pair with grilled chicken or salmon. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

85 Villa Rubini 2009 Pinot Grigio (Delle Venezie); $11. This fresh and luminous Pinot Grigio opens with aromas of citrus and cut green grass and feels sharp and clean on the palate. Pair this wine with easy finger foods or tuna salad. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

85 Vinjuli 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Grave); $10. From northeast Italy, here's a fresh and upfront Pinot Grigio that opens with a luminous appearance and segues to standard aromas of pear, apple and citrus. Pair this wine with Chinese or Thai dishes. Imported by Argen Wines. —M.L.

85 Zonin 2009 Pinot Grigio (Friuli Aquileia); $13. Zonin's easy going Pinot Grigio from northeast Italy opens with a bright, luminous appearance and segues to aromas of citrus, peach and pear. The wine is measured in terms of intensity and persistency, but it does offer a crisp, clean finish. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

SPAIN RED WINES

RIOJA

93 Marqués de Murrieta 2007 Dalmau (Rioja); $115. Concentrated to the max, with young, closed aromas of coconut, charcoal, mint leaf, leather, hot pavement and black fruit. The palate is juvenile, full and warm, and it delivers a jolt of meaty black fruit, licorice and baking-spice flavors. Toasty late, with no shortage of structure and oak. Should age well for a decade or so. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. ***Cellar Selection.*** —M.S.

93 Viñedos de Paganos 2007 La Nieta Tempranillo (Rioja); $164. One sniff gives you all the info needed to process this as a terrific modern Rioja. It's rich, cuddly, oaky and minty, with tons of spice and black fruit. The palate is juicier than in the past, with lively black cherry, cassis, tobacco, vanilla and mocha flavors. Yet another fine Nieta from the Eguren family. Drink now through 2018. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

91 Dinastía Vivanco 2007 Colección Vivanco 4 Varietales (Rioja); $85. Tight on the nose, with dense aromas of black fruit, leather, dried cheese and earth. It's also fairly smoky and lively, with textured tannins, a generous mouthfeel and complex flavors of berry, pepper and spice. A lively, forward style made from Tempranillo, Graciano, Garnacha and Mazuelo. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

90 Dinastía Vivanco 2007 Colección Vivanco Parcelas de Garnacha (Rioja); $95. Powerful and raisiny on the nose, with asphalt, char and cassis. The palate is saturated and sweet, with flavors of black raisin, plum and blackberry. Staunch on the finish, with licorice and blackness. Solid, strong Garnacha. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

88 Dinastía Vivanco 2007 Colección Vivanco Parcelas de Mazuelo (Rioja); $95. Mazuelo is almost always a blending grape for a reason: it's limited in depth and weighty. So it's no surprise that this opens with leather, prune and bullish jam and liqueur aromas. The palate, however, is kind of sharp and lacking depth, while the flavor profile is juicy, herbal and folds in cassis and berry. Snappy and acidic for an expensive varietal wine. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.S.

86 El Circulo 2009 Tempranillo (Rioja); $10. Young, bright, candied and clean, with cherry and raspberry aromas leading straight to solid berry and mildly herbal flavors. Has a good feel and texture to it for a young, inexpensive Rioja. Basic but well made and easy to drink. Imported by Luneau USA Inc. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

TORO

94 Maurodos 2006 San Román (Toro); $70. Dark, tight and masculine smelling, San Román is once again one of the two or three

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best wines from Toro. This vintage is black, extracted and super ripe, but it maintains a fine level of balance and more than adequate freshness. Flavors of coconut, vanilla and chocolate announce generous new oak, as does mocha and espresso on the finish. Heady but ready; ageable for another 5–8 years. Imported by Grapes of Spain. ***Editors' Choice.*** —M.S.

91 Matarredonda 2006 Juan Rojo (Toro); $22. An endearing, balanced, controlled Toro with earthy aromas of blackberry jam, fine leather and mellow herbs. The palate is big, tannic and rock solid, while the flavors are perfectly approachable, sweet and tilt toward chocolate and blackberry. A bit creamy on the finish, with molasses and caramel. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Ole Imports. —M.S.

CIGALES

91 Val de Los Frailes 2005 Selección Personal Tempranillo (Cigales); $75. This small-lot Tempranillo is the best wine from this producer that I've come across. It's full, dark and pure, with bold berry and black plum aromas. It's on the verge of overripe but brings things back to lush, raisiny and flavorful due to just-right acidity. Best if you like thick, chunky, weighty reds with flesh and richness. Drink now through 2012; 75 cases produced. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.S.

89 Museum 2005 Cigales; $17. A very good wine from Cigales that opens with dark cherry, char and tar, minerality and rustic leather and herb aromas that aren't 100% laboratory clean. The palate has snap and flavors of herbal berry and cherry, while the finish is drying and crisply tannic. A food-friendly wine that's ready to drink. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

87 Traslanzas 2005Cigales; $33. Blackberry, tar and raisiny berry aromas rule the dense, dark bouquet, while the palate is short on vitality and large on big, raisiny flavors and prune. More tannic and grabby than smooth and free-flowing, with raisiny afternotes and some bitterness. Good but really ripe; 875 cases made. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

OTHER RED WINES

89 Altos del Cuco 2008 Yecla; $10. A smooth wine for the price where all the dots connect. The nose has black cherry and raisin, while the palate is lush, deep and concentrated, with rewarding flavors of cherry, cassis and roasted plum. Lasting on the finish, with a licorice flavor. Very good wine for the money; Monastrell/Syrah/Tempranillo is the blend. Imported by Opici Import Company. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.

88 Atalaya 2008 Almansa; $16. Potent, dark and concentrated, with aromas of fresh blacktop, bacon and blackberry. The palate is layered and pretty deep, with dark flavors of blackberry, bitter chocolate and burnt oak. Intense and just complex enough. Good wine made from Monastrell, Garnacha and other grapes. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

88 Bodegas Silvano Garcia 2008 Viña Honda (Jumilla); $14. A blend of Monastrell, Tempranillo and Syrah that's ripe and raisiny but still fresh enough to earn its stripes. The nose is powerful and intense, with a sweet, baked character, while the palate tastes naturally rich but restrained, with blackberry and jammy finishing notes. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

87 Montgó 2007 Monastrell-Shiraz (Yecla); $15. Full-forced berry and cherry aromas are clean and fruity despite accents of leather and heat. The palate offers a good feel, healthy kick and tasty black fruit flavors touched up by hints of chocolate and pepper. Narrow on the finish, with espresso and spice. A solid, good wine from older vines. Imported by Regency Wine Group. —M.S.

86 Lorca 2008 Monastrell (Bullas); $10. A dark color and stout aromas of black cherry and leather are inviting, while the palate shows a fresh bounciness along with juicy flavors of red and black berries that bring a touch of creamy vanilla. A lively wine for Southern Spain, but one that's regular and not hard to understand. Imported by Frontier Wine Imports. ***Best Buy.*** —M.S.



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CALIFORNIA RED WINES

CABERNETS & BLENDS

97 Dominus 2007 Red Wine (Napa Valley); $129. Easily the greatest Dominus in memory. Comes down on the drier, lower alcohol and less ripe side than many Cabs in its league, yet lacks for nothing in complexity and sheer deliciousness. Tantalizes with blackberry tart, cherry, carob bean and a Pinot Noir-esque cola-rhubarb richness that retreats behind rich tannins and an earthiness suggesting sweet blond tobacco and dried sage. Clearly ageable, it will develop bottle complexity over the next 12 years, at least. It's 94% Cabernet Sauvignon, with a few drops of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

97 Von Strasser 2007 Reserve (Diamond Mountain); $125. Napa Bordeaux-style wines don't get much richer than this. It is, extraordinary, in large part due to the perfect vintage. So rich, so ripe in fruit, and yet so brilliantly balanced in tannins and acidity. Really world-class. Made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Malbec, it offers dazzlingly complex waves of blackberry and black currant fruit, with suggestions of cocoa, spice and cedar. Drink now–2021. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

96 Duckhorn 2006 The Discussion (Napa Valley); $115. Duckhorn set out to make a dazzler, and succeeded. A Bordeaux blend based mainly on Cabernet Sauvignon, it has too many flavors to list, but blackberries, dark chocolate, orange peel, red licorice, bacon and dusty Indian spices surely top the list, wrapped into soft but super fine tannins. Really a first-rate wine that earns a place in the Napa pantheon. Now–2015, in a good cellar. —S.H.

96 Jarvis 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $125. It's huge in extract, in the form of massively infused blackberries and black currants, cherry liqueur and sweet, smoky cedar wood from 100% new oak, with perfectly ripened tannins and a deft touch of acidity. Defines the voluptuous, Napa cult style. Should age for many years, although it's soft and delicious enough to drink now. —S.H.

95 Chalk Hill 2007 Estate (Chalk Hill); $90. Made in the modern style, this Cabernet-based Bordeaux-style blend was aged in mostly new French oak for 20 months, so it shows plenty of toasty, oaky notes. It's softly delicious, with tiers of raspberry, cherry, red currant, milk chocolate, violet and dried herb flavors, wrapped into the smoothest possible tannins. An extraordinarily beautiful wine for drinking now and the next 4–5 years. —S.H.

95 Jarvis 2006 Lake William (Napa Valley); $105. A blend of Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot, this wine defines the cult style of immediate softness and deliciousness. Aged in 100% new oak, it adds a layer of caramelized vanilla to the ultra rich blackberry, black cherry, red currant, chocolate, anise and exotic Indian spice flavors. Superb now, and should develop over the next six years. —S.H.

94 Von Strasser 2007 Post Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $80. A big, vital, 100% Cabernet from a mountain known for cellar-worthy reds.



Strikes you right away with sheer deliciousness, offering potent blackberry, cherry, violet and chocolate flavors that are enhanced with sweetly smoked oak. Yet it has the tannic structure and inherent balance to improve in the bottle over the next 6-10 years. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

94 Von Strasser 2007 Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $70. A brilliant wine that shows the world how delicious young Napa Valley Cabernet can be. Just dazzles with the richness and purity of blackberry, mocha, leather and cedar flavors, with a finish you can measure in minutes. Bordeaux yearns for such ripeness. Terrific now and through 2015. —S.H.

93 Ehlers Estate 2007 1886 Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); $95. This is the winery's top bottling from the estate vineyard, off Highway 29 in St. Helena. Mostly Cabernet Sauvignon, it shows the variety's blackberry and cherry flavors, with notes of violets and milk chocolate. New oak to the tune of 70% adds a rich, caramelly smokiness. Very delicious, and should develop for a few years, although the softness limits longterm cellaring. —S.H.

93 Ledson 2007 Cepage (Sonoma County); $86. A beautiful Bordeaux blend, soft and intricately detailed, with something for everyone. Fruit fans will like the array of blackberries, cherries and raspberries, and oak lovers will appreciate the sweet, caramelized smokiness. The tannins are rich and furry, and the finish lasts for a long time. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

93 Mario Bazan 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $50. A terrific Cabernet that feels lush and important in the mouth. Just shows that classic Napa Valley elegance of tannins, with well-ripened fruity flavors of blackberries, currants and cedar. Maybe too soft for the long haul, but an impressive beauty now and for the next few years. —S.H.

93 Von Strasser 2007 Sori Bricco Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $80. A beautifully rich, complex mountain wine that wants some time in the cellar. Dry and complex in tannin structure, it shows flamboyant blackberry, cherry, raspberry, chocolate, roasted almond and brown sugar flavors, as delicious as a succulent granola candy bar. Already throwing some sediment, it's fine now and should develop at least through 2015. —S.H.

93 Von Strasser 2007 Agira Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $80. Strong now in fruity flavor and oak, with potent mountain tannins, this tiny-production Cab wants some time to knit together. It's rich and extracted in blackberry tart with the sweet smoky crust, black currant jam, blueberry, dark chocolate, anise and cedar flavors that finish in a complex swirl of dusty spices. Try after 2013. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

92 Black Ridge 2007 San Andreas Red (Santa Cruz Mountains); $49. A beautiful wine, from a winery that's piling up an impressive track record. Made from all five classic Bordeaux varieties, this 07 shows the balance of the vintage, with gorgeous tannins and focused characteristic of a mountain vineyard. The blackberry and black currant flavors have a firm minerality. Best now for its soft lusciousness, and should hold in the bottle for a good six years. —S.H.

92 Chalk Hill 2006 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Chalk Hill); $65. If you like some green herbaceousness in your Cabs, which some say makes them more Bordeaux-like, this is for you. It's very dry and somewhat tannic and extremely elegant, with oak-inspired blackberry, cherry, currant and spice flavors. A lovely, upscale restaurant wine. —S.H.

92 Frazier 2007 Memento Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $110. You should know that the alcohol in this multi-vineyard wine is high, which makes it soft and slightly sweet. But it's also enormously rich and complex, offering tiers of blackberries and raspberries, chocolate and currants, dusty spices and smoky oak. Totally in the modern cult style, it's at its best now and for a few more years. —S.H.

92 The Treat 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $75. This is among the bigger, riper, more opulent Cabs out there. It's classic New-World style Napa Cabernet, a cult wannabe made in extremely limited quantities aimed at a mailing list. It's quite rich and soft in black currants, chocolate and cedar, with highish alcohol. —S.H.

92 Von Strasser 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $50. This is the least expensive of Von Strasser's 07 Cabs, but it's just about as good as the vineyard selections, which makes it a relative bargain. Dry and rich in refined tannins, it shows blackberry, black currant, cassis and mineral flavors, and should develop over the next 4–5 years. —S.H.

92 Whitehall Lane 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $60. Made in the modern style of extreme ripeness, softness and deliciousness. Really captivates for its wealth of cherry and raspberry jam, ripe blackberry tart and oak-inspired vanilla and butterscotch flavors. Hard to predict where it's going due to the softness, but it sure is tasty now. —S.H.

91 Bell 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $45. This young, vigorous Cabernet is full of ripe, upfront fruity flavors, yet it's dry and complex, and is grounded by a pleasing tug of herbaceousness. Most notable is the rich blackberry, raspberry and currant fruit, and the way the sweet, smoky oak complements it. Drink now for freshness. —S.H.

91 Jarvis 2005 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $85. It's all about sweet, delicious flavor in this 100% Cabernet. Dazzles the mouth with the essence of blackberries, cassis, cherry tart with the smoky crust, chocolate and exotic sandalwood, wrapped into the richest, finest tannins you can imagine. Compulsively drinkable, if a little too forward with its charms. Now–2013. —S.H.

91 Peter Franus 2006 Red Wine (Napa Valley); $50. Quite a good wine, with Cabernet-esque blackberries and black currants, and a rich toastiness from charred oak. Feels a little angular and jammy in youth. Give it two or three years in the cellar to soften and mellow. —S.H.

90 Bell 2006 Clone 6 Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $90. This 100% Cabernet has a very strong flavor. It's almost assaultive in blackberries and black currants that are sweet and jammy, while oak adds even sweeter notes of caramel and butterscotch. The result is somewhat awkward, too much of a good thing. Seems like it needs time to integrate and resolve contradictions. Try after 2013. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

90 Frazier 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $55. Rich fruit and oak mark this delicious Cabernet Sauvignon. You can't help but like the blackberries, plums, currants, licorice, cocoa and toast flavors, or the way the tannins are so smooth and refined. Good now, with a brief decant, and should hold for 4–5 more years. —S.H.

90 Gain Bay 2008 Cabernet Family (Napa Valley); $20. This Bordeaux blend is dry, smooth and complex. There's a wonderful earthiness and herbalilty to it, with green olives complementing Cabernet's blackberry and black currant fruit, as well as the effects of oak aging. Shows real elegance and interest, at a very fair price. Drink now. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 Whitehall Lane 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $40. This lush, attractive Cabernet impresses for its explosion of blackberry, cherry, cassis and dark chocolate flavors that are so rich and fine. It's almost sweet, but stands back at the last second, making the finish dry and spicy. A beautiful wine for drinking now and over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

89 Howell at the Moon 2007 The Knoll Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); $100. Made in the richly extracted, super-oaky and sweetly soft style of modern Napa Cabs, this wine trades structure for sheer deliciousness. The flavors are wildly extravagant: blackberries, blueberries, cherries, pie crust, cola, exotic spices, smoke, graphite. But what the wine really needs is greater architecture and more definitive dryness. Drink now–2012. —S.H.

89 Raymond 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $32. A young, vigorous Cabernet, brimming with acidity and jammy blackberry, cherry, herb and black currant fruit flavors. The tannins have an edginess that suggests a year or so in the cellar. —S.H.

89 Von Strasser 2007 Spaulding Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); $80. One of the winery's more accessibly forward Cabs, the Spaulding is rich in blackberry and cherry pie, chocolate and caramelized oak flavors. It's delicious, if a little direct. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

88 Courtney Benham 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); $25. A lovely Cabernet. Shows the softness and herbaceousness that mark Alexander Valley Cabs, but in a good way, with a streak of red cherries, tobacco and sandalwood. Fine now with a good steak. —S.H.

88 Dutcher Crossing 2007 Tribute to a Journey Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); $40. A fine Cabernet, dry and balanced. It's rich in blackberries, anise and currants, with an herbaceousness that grounds it. Food-friendly, and totally drinkable now. —S.H.

88 Narsai David 2005 Cuvée Venus Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $48. Quite a good Napa Valley Cabernet, with a complex tannin structure and tiers of blackberry, black currant, orange zest, Provençal herb, violet and anise flavors, and a touch of raisins on the finish. Don't be alarmed by the sediment it's already throwing in the glass. Feels somewhat sharp, which lowers the point score. —S.H.

88 Peter Franus 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $40. A big, rich



wine, candy-sweet in fruit and toasted oak. Shows the blackberry, cherry, nougat, roasted almond and chocolate flavors of a delicious granola bar. The tannins are a work of art, soft, intricate and refined. —S.H.

87 Bell 2006 Claret (Napa Valley); $35. Claret is the old-fashioned word for Bordeaux, but it has no legal meaning in the U.S. This Cabernet-based wine contains some Syrah, which gives a smoked meat or bacon note to the blackberries and black currants. It's delicious, if a little sweet. —S.H.

87 Decoy 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $25. This is a strongly flavored Cabernet. It has upfront blackberry and red cherry jam flavors, with some sweet spicy notes from French oak barrels. It's not a wine you want to age, but is smooth and flattering now. —S.H.

87 Howell at the Moon 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); $75. You'd never know this was a Howell Mountain Cab, it's so fruity and accessible. Shows very rich blackberry jam, cherry pie, cola, sandalwood and exotic Indian spice flavors that are frankly delicious. But the structure is very soft, and the wine feels as candied as a dessert pastry. —S.H.

87 Jeff Gordon 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $69. Rich blackberry purée, blueberry jam, raspberry pie, cherry tart and cedar flavors in this Cab. Rather direct in its appeal, and a bit too sweet, but its solid New World style will appeal to some. —S.H.

87 Oakville Terraces 2007 Hillside Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); $104. An ambitious wine that aims for the fences and hits a double. It's soft and super-fruity, with the sweet, extracted flavors of blackberries and cherries, liberally enhanced with oak, that characterize modern Napa cult-style Cabs. But it lacks some depth and complexity, especially at this inflated price. —S.H.

87 Sculpterra 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); $30. Lots of rich, forward flavor in this wine. It floods the palate with blackberries, black currants, blueberries, dark chocolate and sweetly smoked cedar wood, and is properly dry. There's some sharpness that interferes with a smooth palate ride, but it's a pretty nice wine. —S.H.

87 Spann Vineyards 2007 The Classic Four (Sonoma Valley); $20. This is a Cabernet-based Bordeaux blend, and it's very good, especially for the price. Smooth and soft, it offers lush blackberry, red currant, cherry, chocolate and herb flavors that are drinking well now. —S.H.

87 Turnbull 2007 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); $40. A pretty good wine, soft and appealing in blackberry fruit and oak, with refined tannins. Doesn't have the dramatic power of the Turnbull Cabs of the 90s, and unlikely to age. From the estate vineyard in Oakville. —S.H.

87 Valley Legend 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); $65. Overoaked, with caramelized vanilla aromas and flavors dominating. Under all that is a pretty good Cabernet, with blackberry and cherry flavors and smooth tannins. —S.H.

87 Venteux 2007 Starr Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); $48. This is a very big, elaborate Cabernet whose main feature is fruity flavor. It's explosive in blackberry, black currant, cassis and dark chocolate, accented with sweet, smoky oak. Made in the modern cult style, it's a little too sharp in the finish, but the richness is impressive. —S.H.

87 Whalebone 2007 Whalebone Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); $35. A solid Cabernet, nice and dry, with firm tannins framing blackberry, black currant, olive tapenade and cedar flavors. Feels a bit sharp, but otherwise a good effort. —S.H.

86 337 Wine Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Lodi); $14. This Cabernet is good enough to drink with a nice meal, although it's not quite fancy enough for your special dinners. It's nicely dry and balanced, with flavors of blackberries, black currants and oak. —S.H.

86 Brander 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley); $50. As soft and sweet as a melted raspberry and chocolate tart dessert pastry, with a sprinkle of anisette liqueur. Lacks structural integrity, but it's delicious. —S.H.

86 Estancia 2007 Reserve Meritage (Paso Robles); $31. Lots of rich blackberry, currant, cedar and spice flavors in this dry wine, and it's firm in finely ground tannins. Shows some acerbic sharpness throughout, especially when you swallow. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Raymond 2007 Family Classic Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa-Sonoma-Lake); $20. Dry and peppery, with some overripe raisins, but otherwise a pretty good everyday Cab. It has oak-influenced blackberry and cherry jam flavors. —S.H.

85 Brander 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley); $28. A tasty Cab, if a little one-dimensional, with soft tannins. Shows red cherry and raspberry jam flavors, enhanced with sweetly smoked oak. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Grayson 2009 Lot 10 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); $10. A solid Cabernet whose price makes it a great house wine. The wine is dry and fine, with blackberry, currant, carob and cedar flavors. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

85 Pezzi King 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley); $20. Good and tasty, if a little one-dimensional, offering blackberry and cherry jam flavors, accented with sweet oak. Drink now. —S.H.

PINOT NOIR

96 Byron 2008 Nielson Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $34. Silky and velvety soft in the mouth, coating the palate with extraordinary raspberry and cherry flavors, enriched with sweet oak, and spiced with cloves, cinnamon and white pepper. There are even notes of cocoa and orange zest. Yet brisk acidity makes it all clean and vibrant. It's hard to imagine a California Pinot Noir tasting better than this—and what a fantastic bargain. Drink now–2014. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

96 Nine Barrel 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $90. Take a great Napa Cabernet and turn it into a Russian River Pinot, and you get this wonderful Pinot Noir. It's a low production blend of various vineyards controlled by Jackson Family Farms, and each barrel seems picked for sheer lusciousness. Dry and

silky, with perfect tannin-acid balance, it shows rich, complex waves of raspberries, cherries, Dr. Pepper cola, balsam, pepper and all kinds of hard to define forest floor and mineral complications. Fully approachable now and for the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

95 Foxen 2008 Julia's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $54. A beautiful Pinot, showing the depth of fruit and structural balance this fine vineyard is famous for. It's a low-yield wine, aged in 50% new French oak that adds a rich, smoky vanilla coat to the raspberry and cherry jam, spice and mineral flavors. No stems were included in the fermentation, which accounts for the silky transparency. This compelling Pinot changes with every scent and sip. now–2013. —S.H.

94 Byron 2008 Monument Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $60. This best of barrels selection from Byron's considerable number of vineyards in Santa Maria Valley is a stunner. It's immediately likeable for its soft, creamy mouthfeel, and the way the raspberry, cherry, currant, bacon, cocoa and sandalwood flavors finish so rich, yet so dry. Seems too soft for the long haul despite the firm tannins, but should provide beautiful drinking over the next six years. —S.H.

94 Sanctuary 2007 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $33. A terrific Pinot from a winery that's building up a great track record with this bottling from Santa Maria's most famous vineyard. It's their best yet, with near-perfect acid-tannin balance, and gorgeous, opulent flavors. Tremendously rich in raspberry and cherry pie, with dusty Indian spices, Provençal herbs and a lovely coat of sweet, smoky oak. So easy to like, and should develop for a good six years. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

94 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2008 Freestone Hills Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $40. The Freestone area is one of the coolest regions in the sprawling Sonoma Coast. Acidity marks this bone-dry, elegant wine. It tastes like somebody gave a squirt of lime to the cherry, raspberry, cola, persimmon, pomegranate and sandalwood flavors. Seems like a natural for the cellar. Drink 2012–2016. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

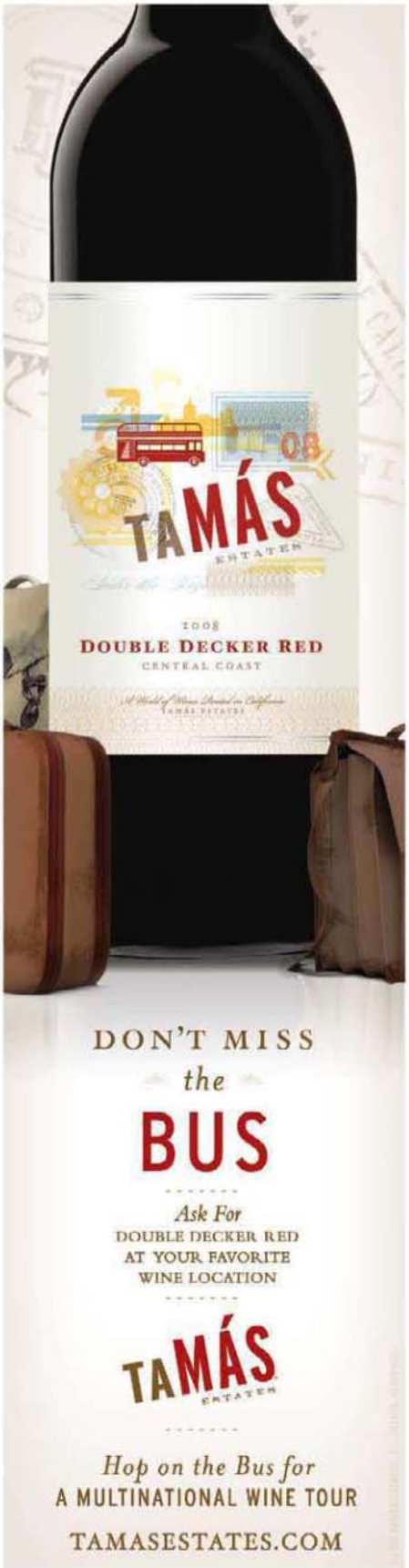
93 Byron 2008 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $40. Only 25 cases were produced, but this lovely Pinot Noir is worth the search. Very rich and soft and appealing, with pure flavors of black cherry tart, raspberry purée, cola, dusty Indian spices and smoky sandalwood, wrapped into finely ground tannins, and balanced with acidity. Just beautiful to drink now and for the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

93 Byron 2008 Julia's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $40. Firm in acidity and tannins, with an earthy minerality, this is a Pinot Noir you want to stash away for a few years. It's very dry and quite balanced, with a deep core of black cherries, currants, mushu plum sauce, anise, pepper and sandalwood. The window of drinkability extends until 2015, but give it a brief decant if you open it now. —S.H.

93 Byron 2008 Sierra Madre Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $40. Notable for its soft texture, thoroughly ripe fruit, and richness of mouthfeel, which is what you want in Pinot Noir. It's not an ager, but so deliciously refined, you want to keep drinking. Shows ripe raspberries and cherries, with their liqueur counterparts, and the sweet smokiness of oak. —S.H.

93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard La Masía Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $45. The vineyard is in the cooler Green Valley, although you wouldn't know it from the label. The wine shows considerable crispness and dryness, with moderate alcohol. There are some tabasco and balsam notes grounding the richer cherry and sandalwood flavors. It's enormously elegant, a smooth, complex, silky Pinot Noir that should develop through the next six years. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.

93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard Stony Block Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $47. Grown at the highest part of the Green Valley estate vineyard, this Pinot is tight and concentrated in raspberry, cherry, cola and Indian spices, with a delightful mineralty and a rich coat of new oak. Acidity and fine tannins give it elegant structure. Give it a few years to let the parts come together. ***Cellar Selection.*** —S.H.



93 Marimar Estate 2007 Don Miguel Vineyard Earthquake Block Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $47. This block-grown Pinot from the estate vineyard, in the heart of the cool Green Valley, shows the signature Marimar style of tight acidity, dryness, silky elegance and red fruit. It's not a big, fat, blockbuster Pinot, but a leaner, more masculine style. The raspberry, cherry, red currant and sandalwood flavors should hold up well to the aging process. now–2013, at least. —S.H.

92 Phillips Hill 2008 Beeson Tree Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); $40. From a winery that's piling up an impressive record with Mendocino Pinot Noir comes this crisp, silky wine. It's light in color and deceptively light in body, in the way of some great Burgundies that age effortlessly, even when you think they won't. Dry and pure, it has sweetly complex wild cherry, raspberry, cola and smoky oak flavors. Fine now, and could really surprise in six years or more. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

91 Benovia 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $45. A big, strongly flavored Pinot Noir. What it may lack in subtlety, it more than makes up for in sheer power. Practically a food group in itself, with massive waves of cherries, raspberries, pomegranates, sweet rhubarb pie and sandalwood, wrapped into a silky texture. Drink now–2014. —S.H.

91 Bernardus 2008 Ingrid's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carmel Valley); $80. This is a rich, plump young Pinot Noir. It's medium-bodied and velvety, with plum, black cherry, bacon and Indian spice flavors, and with a lovely coat of sweet, smoky sandalwood. The tannin-acid balance suggests 5–7 years in the cellar, although it's fine now with a decant. —S.H.

91 Foxen 2008 Block 8 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $56. This tiny production (655 cases) Pinot from one of the most famous vineyards in Santa Barbara County is enormously rich in raspberries, cherries and sandalwood. It's not very subtle now but delicious, like a dessert pasty, although it's totally dry. Easy to like, although at this price, you might want a little more complexity. Try stashing it in the cellar for 2–3 years. —S.H.

91 Marimar Estate 2006 Don Miguel Vineyard Cristina Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $49. Held back an extra year, this wine shows lots of crunchy acidity. It's also still fairly tannic. Together, those two structural elements will permit it to age, but the question is whether the fruit is dense enough. The flavors include raspberries, pomegranates, cola, rhubarb and sandalwood. Could surprise after 2013. —S.H.

91 Phillips Hill 2008 Oppenlander Vineyard Pinot Noir (Mendocino); $42. The winery follow up a string of very good Pinots from this vineyard with another solid hit. The wine is dry, silky, medium-bodied and delicious, offering an array of raspberry jam, cherry pie, cola and vanilla-oak flavors. The acidity is pronounced and just fine. Good now, and should develop interesting nuances over the next six years. —S.H.

91 Rodney Strong 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $40. Made in an immediately appealing style, this Pinot is soft and lush and vast in fruit and oak richness. It floods the palate with cherry and raspberry pie filling, vanilla, cinnamon and sandalwood flavors, and the texture is silky and elegant. —S.H.

90 Ellman Family 2008 Alexis Skye Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $49. Tremendously complex, offering ever-changing elements for the palate to discover. Cherries, raspberries, dusty spices, gingerbread, bacon fat, sweet vanilla, toast, they all flood together. Delicious, but seems a little soft, possibly lacking the structure to age. —S.H.

90 La Crema 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $40. Tasted in a flight of more expensive Pinot Noirs, this beauty did just fine. It's an absolutely lovely wine to drink now. Dry and silky, with refreshing acidity, it offers complex berry, cherry, cola, spice and oak flavors. Easy to find, with 4,700 cases produced. —S.H.

90 La Follette 2008 Sangiacomo Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $40. Lots of bright acidity and upfront raspberry, cherry and apricot jam fruit in this attractive wine. It's vivacious and delicious and dry enough to merit repeated sipping without palling. Best now and for a few years. —S.H.

90 Sequana 2008 Sundawg Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir (Green Valley); $50. You'll find an unusual note of freshly crushed black pepper in this Pinot Noir. Not overwhelming, but enough to vie with the cherries, cola and sandalwood. It's an excellent wine, dry and silky, although not on a par with the magnificent 2007. —S.H.

90 Wrath 2008 San Saba Vineyard Pinot Noir (Monterey); $49. The vineyard bears only a Monterey appellation, but the location is strategically close to both the Santa Lucia Highlands and the Arroyo Seco. The wine is quite good, racy in acidity and dry. It offers complex flavors of strawberries and cherries, with earthier notes of sautéed wild mushrooms and mulch. A real success, and a wine that will pick up bottle complexity over the next 4–5 years. —S.H.

89 Bartz-Allen 2008 Split Rock Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $42. Shows an improvement over the 07, maybe because the vines are a little older. Still dry and crisp in acids and jammy, with raspberry and cherries, but with extra depth and length. Good now, but probably better after 3–4 years in the cellar. —S.H.

89 Bernardus 2008 Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); $80. Very rich, ripe and bold, in the way of Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noirs, with mouth filling cherry, raspberry, red plum and mocha flavors, enhanced with smoky oak. Tasty, but a bit ponderous, with some sharpness through the finish. Try cellaring for 4–5 years and see where it goes. —S.H.

89 La Crema 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); $40. A deliciously drinkable Pinot for drinking now with a great steak. Shows the good acidity of Carneros, with a light silky mouthfeel and ripe wild cherry, red currant, rose petal and white pepper flavors, accented with smoky, caramelized oak barrels. —S.H.

89 La Follette 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $30. This is an elegant, sophisticated Pinot Noir whose long hang-time raspberry, cherry and persimmon fruit flavors are highlighted by crisp, cool-climate acidity. The wine feels racy and stimulating in the mouth, if a bit short. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Bernardus 2008 Fairview Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia High-

lands); $60. A good, medium-bodied, dry and silky Pinot Noir, from a vineyard in this well-regarded region in Monterey County. Shows rich cherry, plum and cola flavors, with oaky notes, although there's an acidic sharpness that cuts through the mouth. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Fourth Estate 2008 La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $36. Nicely dry and silky, with a good cut of acidity that tears across the cherry, pomegranate and cola flavors. Feels youthfully disjointed now, with jaggy tannins. Give it 2-3 years to settle down. —S.H.

88 Sanford 2008 La Rinconada Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); $50. Young, super-dry and sharp in acids, with a wintergreen streak to the tannic cherryskin flavors. Oak provides much needed relief, in the form of smoky, sweet richness. Feels severe and aloof now, but offers a core of tantalizing richness, and could surprise over the next 5–7 years. —S.H.

87 Bearboat 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $21. Sweet smoky oak and a boatload of fruit dominate this soft, tasty Pinot Noir. The aromas and flavors include sandalwood, vanilla, raspberries, strawberries, red cherries and bacon. It's a pretty, polished and silky wine for drinking now with a nice steak or lamb chop. —S.H.

87 Bernardus 2008 Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); $75. There's a cut of acidity that slices through the richness, interfering with the palate's enjoyment of this dry, silky Pinot Noir. Its flavors are of cherry tart, with the sweet, smoky crust, and a splash of cherry liqueur. Drink now. —S.H.

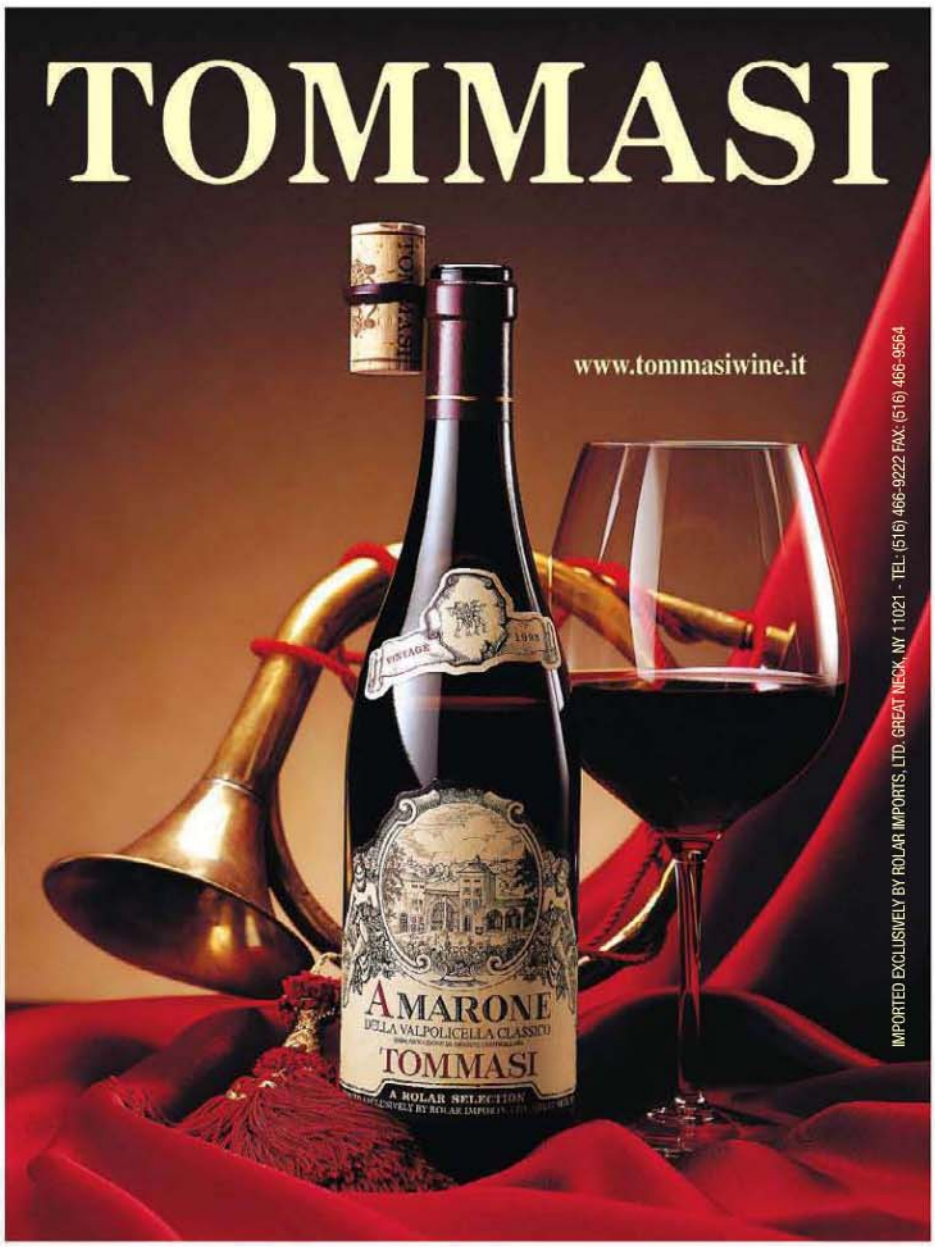
87 Foxen 2008 Block N Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); $52. A good wine, with some noble features such as perfect tannins and wonderfully fresh acidity. But, good as it is, there's something off in the taste. Too jammy, too fruity, with a candied, raspberry granola sweetness, lacking depth and the brooding, earthy layers you want in a Pinot this expensive. —S.H.

87 Foxen 2008 Sea Smoke Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); $80. A very good wine from this famous vineyard, although it's compromised by some excessively ripe, raisiny flavors. There are just enough of them to interfere with the otherwise smooth, silky raspberries and cherries, and the new oak, which is delicious. Doesn't seem like an ager. —S.H.

87 Ketcham Estate 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $38. Fruit fans will exult in this jammy Pinot Noir. It floods the mouth with raspberries, cherries and cola, with an elaborate coating of sweet, smoky sandalwood. The richness is balanced with fine acidity. Best now and over the next year or so. —S.H.

87 Mendelson 2007 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); $35. Too jammy to earn a higher score, although it's a pleasant enough Pinot. Shows silky flavors of raspberries, cherries, blueberries and blackberries that taste like pie filling, dusted with cinnamon and cocoa. There's a fine bite of acidity. —S.H.

87 Morgan 2008 Twelve Clones Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); $32. A very nice Pinot Noir from Pinot maestro Dan Morgan Lee. The Twelve Clones isn't his best bottling, and only approximates the richness and



complexity of the more expensive ones, but then, it costs less. Dry and rich, it has raspberry, cherry, cola and sandalwood flavors that are approachable now. —S.H.

87 Sanford 2008 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); $60. Shows the silky texture, firm tannins and brilliantly developed cherry-berry and spice fruit of this fine vineyard, and is thoroughly dry. But there's a green, minty sharpness throughout that limits depth and ageability. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2007 Balistreri Vineyard Freestone View Block Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $75. There's a cut of strong acidity that compromises this wine, which otherwise is very rich in cherry and raspberry fruit. It's wonderfully silky and dry, and the tannins are thick enough to see the wine through the next 6–8 years. But that acidity is troubling. —S.H.

86 Bearboat 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); $17. There's enough fruit in this simple, soda-like Pinot Noir to start an orchard. It has candied flavors of raspberries, red cherries, strawberries and cola, with oak contributing the usual caramel and vanilla. But it sure is tasty. —S.H.

86 Buena Vista 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); $25. A charming, if simple, Pinot Noir, dry and silky, with good structure and fine, fruity flavors. In France it would define a village style. Drink now with steak, pork chops, mushroom appetizers. —S.H.

86 Castle Rock 2009 Pinot Noir (Mendocino County); $13. You'll find flavors of raspberry jam and cola in this fresh young Pinot Noir. It's a pretty, polished wine, and while it's not terribly complex, it is a very good evocation of California Pinot Noir at an affordable price. —S.H.

86 Olson Ogden 2008 Manchester Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir (Mendocino); $38. Young, fresh and tart now, with upfront cherry and raspberry jam flavors, and an edge of green mint jelly. Feels a bit sharp and simple, but sure is tasty. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Sanford 2008 Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); $40. A pretty, polished Pinot Noir, dry and crisp in acidity, with a pleasantly silky texture. Shows raspberry, cola, mint, vanilla and sandalwood flavors, with a spicy finish. Elegant enough to drink now with a nice steak. —S.H.

86 Venteux 2008 Pinot Noir (San Benito County); $34. Soft and candied, with raspberry tart and sweet, caramelized oak and vanilla cookie flavors. Delicious, but lacks structure and depth, especially at this price. —S.H.

85 Fog Head 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Monterey); $15. Lots to like here. The wine shows a fine, silky texture, the acidity is bright and crisp, the alcohol is nice and modest, and the finish is totally dry. The cherry flavors are a little thin, but it's not a bad Pinot Noir for the price. —S.H.

85 Heron 2009 Pinot Noir (California); $13. A pretty Pinot Noir, dry and silky, with plenty of flavor. Not terribly complicated, but offers a pleasant range of cherries, raspberries and sandalwood. —S.H.

85 Ketcham Estate 2008 Ketcham Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $48. A likeable Pinot for its silky mouthfeel, but a bit too fruity, with jammy raspberry, orange and oak richness, and the supporting structure of acidity and tannins just isn't there. —S.H.

85 Selby 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); $28. Tastes soft and simple, with raspberry tea, pomegranate juice, cola and spicy sandalwood flavors that feel soft and a little sweet. Pleasantly silky in the mouth, but should be more complex, especially at this price. —S.H.

TEMPRANILLO

94 Jarvis 2008 Tempranillo (Napa Valley); $53. This is the best California Tempranillo I have ever reviewed. Grown on the estate vineyard southeast of Napa that might have its own appellation someday, it's as silky and light as a Pinot Noir, and marked by the dryness and acidity you want in a Temp. Shows savory cherry, cola, tobacco, leather and spice flavors. But beyond that, there's a complexity and structure that bring a welcome dimension to the variety. One hundred percent new French oak is not out of place. Very elegant and compelling. —S.H.

86 Just Joshin 2007 Tempranillo (Sierra Foothills); $25. Pretty good for a Tempranillo, especially at this price. It's a dry, light-bodied and silky wine, like Pinot Noir, except the cherry fruit, red currant, licorice and bacon flavors have a powerfully earthy note, like a mushroom and olive tapenade. The acidity could be softer, as it's quite sharp through the finish. —S.H.

86 Twisted Oak 2006 Tempranillo (Calaveras County); $24. Not as sophisticated as the winery's excellent 2005, this Temp is more akin to the 04. It's silky in texture, with raspberry jam and spice flavors, and a touch of dessicated raisins, along with bitter raisinskin tannins. A work in progress. —S.H.

ZINFANDEL

92 Decoy 2008 Zinfandel (Napa Valley); $22. This wonderful wine showcases the blender's art. The grapes come from 11 appellations throughout the valley, and the wine, while notable for its delicious flavors, also is great in structure. It has soft tannins and refreshing acidity, and is entirely dry, with moderate alcohol. Those flavors include raspberry jam, cherry-vanilla cream, cinnamon and white pepper. So easy to like. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

91 Paul Dolan 2007 Zinfandel (Mendocino County); $25. This is a lovely Zinfandel, soft and appealing. It has fine balance and is dry and rich in cherry, currant, Provençal herb, spice and tobacco flavors. Shows real complexity as it changes in the glass. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

91 Pezzi King 2007 Old Vines Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $24. A vigorous, deeply flavored Zinfandel, made from old vines. Impressive for the depth of its black and red wild berry fruit, with nuances of anise, cocoa and a touch of raisins. And lots of spice, which suggests pepper steak. But be warned, the alcohol is very high. —S.H.

90 Rancho Zabaco 2008 Toreador Monte Rosso Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); $60. The main thing to know about this wine is it has extraordinarily high

alcohol, 16.8%. That gives it a hot, peppery mouthfeel, and also the impression of sweetness, although it's actually dry. The flavors of raspberries, cola, red currants and bacon are explosive. It's a wine people will love or not, but it is a very fine expression of its style. —S.H.

88 Dashe Cellars 2007 Louvau Vineyard Old Vines Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $32. This is a very rich, extracted Zinfandel, massive in fruit and spice. Waves of raspberries, cherries and blackberries wash over the palate, edged in chocolate and pepper. Saved from being a fruit bomb by some pretty tannins and a cut of acidity. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Peirano 2008 The Immortal Zin Zinfandel (Lodi); $12. This is a spiritous Zinfandel, in the sense it feels richly soft, unctuous and alcoholic in the mouth, and there's a sweetness to the cherries and chocolate that's almost Port-like, in a good sense. Great barbecue wine, or for drinking with chocolate by a fire on a winter night. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

88 Pezzi King 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $18. A lovely Zinfandel, light and fine in the mouth, like liquid silk. Although it's dry, it's very rich in raspberry jam, cherry pie and rose flavors, and there's also a lot of those famous Dry Creek briary spices. Good price for such a nice wine. —S.H.

87 Dashe Cellars 2008 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $24. A pace off the 2007, but a pretty good Zin. Despite being a little too soft and candy-sweet, it sure is tasty, offering an array of ripe wild red berry, currant, licorice, cocoa, spice and sandalwood flavors. —S.H.

87 Peju 2007 Zinfandel (Napa Valley); $28. A rich, spicy and superripe Zinfandel. It's a bit high and hot in alcohol, but very lush in chocolate, blackberry tart and raspberry jam flavors, sprinkled with peppery Indian spices. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Courtney Benham 2008 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); $20. For a Zinfandel to drink tonight with barbecue, you can't do better than this. It's robust and briary, with wild berry, currant, bacon, pepper and sandalwood flavors that are wrapped into firm tannins. But only 830 cases were produced. —S.H.

85 Clos du Lac 2007 Potter Vineyard Zinfandel (Shenandoah Valley (CA); $20. You'll want some rich, smoky barbecue, slathered in sauce, to eat with this wine, because it's pretty fierce in tannins, and on its own is a bit overripe in raisins. The Shenandoah Valley is an appellation that spreads across the heart of Amador and El Dorado counties, in the Sierra Foothills. —S.H.

85 XYZin 2008 50 Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); $30. A tasty Zin, rich and elaborately layered, with wild red berry, chocolate, spice, gingerbread cookie, brown sugar and sandalwood flavors. A bit too sweet and soft, though. —S.H.

BLENDED RED WINES

93 Azur 2007 Red Wine (Napa Valley); $55. A beautiful wine both in flavor and structure, an all-important combination. Shows rich, classy blackberries and cherries that are almost flamboyant until they're tamed by firm tannins and a nice bite of acidity. Lots of smoky



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oak adds the perfect detail of caramel. Lovely now and for the next five years, at the very least. Syrah-Bordeaux blend of the first order. —S.H.

93 Tor 2007 Cuvée Susan (Napa Valley); $48. The Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend is from Howell Mountain. The Syrah is from the Hudson Vineyard, in Carneros. The wine is very fine, offering complex tiers of blackberries, black currants, cherries, raspberries, bacon, sweet Provençal herbs, spices and toasty oak. Very fine, with a sharp bite of acidity that calls for a good steak. Now and through 2014, at the very least. —S.H.

93 Twisted Oak 2007 The Spaniard (Calaveras County); $49. One of the more interesting Spanish varietal blends in California for the last several vintages. The 07 is mainly Tempranillo, with Graciano and Garnacha. It's a very dry wine, soft and velvety in tannins, with a bite of acidity that makes it somewhat sharp. The flavors are mainly of cherries, with complex notes of green olives, cocoa, anise liqueur and sandalwood, and even a citrusy touch of tangerine zest. A satisfying alternative to Merlot or Syrah that grows more fascinating with each release. Definitely a wine to follow. —S.H.

91 Zaca Mesa 2006 Z Three (Santa Ynez Valley); $42. A very good wine, delicious and soft, although it shows a certain one-dimensionality. But what a delicious dimension that is. Floods the mouth with blackberry, cherry and raspberry tart, milk chocolate, red licorice, spicy bacon and smoky sandalwood flavors. Easy to like, a lot, although it shows some heat toward the finish. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache. —S.H.

90 Ancient Peaks 2007 Oyster Ridge (Paso Robles); $50. Here's a soft, rich red wine that satisfies for its velvety mouthfeel and complex flavors. Made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Merlot and Petit Verdot, it offers blackberry, currant, bacon, dark chocolate and black pepper notes that finish smooth and long. Advances the argument for these unusual blends from Paso Robles. —S.H.

90 Twisted Oak 2007 Parcel 17 (Calaveras County); $32. A robust wine with strong, complex flavors of cherries, red currants, mocha, grilled meat, bacon and plenty of peppery spices. A bit forward and unsubtle, but deliciously dry, with smooth, dusty tannins and a cut of acidity. Seems at its best now with rich fare like lamb. Mourvèdre, Carignane and Graciano. —S.H.

89 X 2008 Red X Winemaker's Blend (North Coast); $15. Here's a sound, easy-drinking and full-bodied red wine that's very versatile at the table. Made from an unusual combination of Syrah, Tempranillo, Grenache and Zinfandel, it's dry and robust, with super-spicy flavors of blackberries, currants and chocolate. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

88 Kenwood 2008 Vintage Red (California); $9. A great success, as this bottling has been for decades. The wine, which is a blend of Petite Sirah, Merlot and Sangiovese, is dry and rich and balanced, showing lots of finesse in the cherry, currant, licorice, mocha and cedar flavors. Easy to find, with 24,000 cases produced. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

87 Brander 2008 Bouchet (Santa Ynez Valley); $35. This is a blend of the two Cabernets, Sauvignon and Franc, with 10% Syrah. It's dry and fruity, with good tannins and zesty acidity. The flavors veer toward cherries, black currants and sandalwood. Drink now. —S.H.

87 She Wines 2006 (Calaveras County); $12. This mountain blend is dry and spicy. It has brisk tannins, with wild cherry, red currant, bacon, herb and pepper flavors. Elegant and appealing. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

86 Whalebone 2007 Whalebone Vineyard Bob (Paso Robles); $30. This blend of Cab, Merlot, Syrah and Zinfandel is a good, everyday wine for drinking with burgers, tacos and similar fare. It's dry and fruity and spicy, with a finish long in currants and licorice. —S.H.

85 Fire Station Red 2007 Engine Company 5 (Mendocino County); $14. A rustic blend of Merlot, Zinfandel, Syrah, Grenache and Petite Sirah, this robust wine has lots of fruity flavor. Drink with Mexican food, burgers, goulash, meat loaf and similar simple fare. —S.H.

85 Jeff Gordon 2006 Joie de Vivre (Napa Valley); $63. Fruity and oaky and very soft, a wine made in the modern cult style meant to appeal to everybody. Tastes like an explosion in a jelly factory. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Spann Vineyards 2007 Mo Zin (California); $22. An easy drinking, rather rustic wine, dry, soft and spicy, with a light, silky texture. Shows cherry, currant and tobacco flavors. Zinfandel, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah and Syrah. —S.H.

CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

92 Freemark Abbey 2009 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); $22. This is an oaky, leesy Chardonnay, and quite a good one. Although it's super rich in fruit, it shows a crisply acidic minerality that grounds it and makes it serious. That fruit is wildly forward in pineapple tart, pear butter, Key lime pie and golden apricot. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

92 La Follette 2008 Sangiacomo Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); $30. A beautiful young Chardonnay, brisk in acidity, and ultra-clean despite the richness. Shows exotic tropical fruit, white peach and sweet vanilla flavors, with a fine minerality that grounds and complexes the fruit. Really easy for everybody to like, although connoisseurs will find all kinds of nuances. —S.H.

92 Palmaz 2008 Amalia Chardonnay (Napa Valley); $45. One of the better Napa Valley Chardonnays out there. The fruit was sourced from various parts of the valley. Fruity richness is balanced with clean, zesty acidity, and the overlay of 50% new oak is just fine. Shows vanilla cream, pineapple, mango and lime flavors, with a pretty minerality. —S.H.

91 Morgan 2008 Double L Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); $36. Ultra-rich and decadent, Morgan's 08 Double L shows its signature tropical fruit, apricot and mineral flavors, accented with the smoky vanilla, buttered toast and caramel from toasted oak, and brightened with acidity. Although it's dry, it's oozing in glycerine and honey. Will not age, so drink up. —S.H.

90 Bearboat 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $17. Made in a Chablis style, this Chardonnay is bone dry and crisp in acidity. The pineapple and peach flavors

are integrated with stony minerals. It's not a complex wine, but is super-clean and zesty, a nice complement to shellfish, mushroom risotto or a perfectly roasted chicken. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 Hess Collection 2008 Chardonnay (Mount Veeder); $35. This enormously rich Chardonnay was grown in the winery's dramatic mountain vineyard. It's powerful in concentrated pineapple jam and lemon fruit, while winemaker interventions add creamy notes of vanilla, honey and buttered toast. What it trades in nuance, it more than makes up for in sheer power. —S.H.

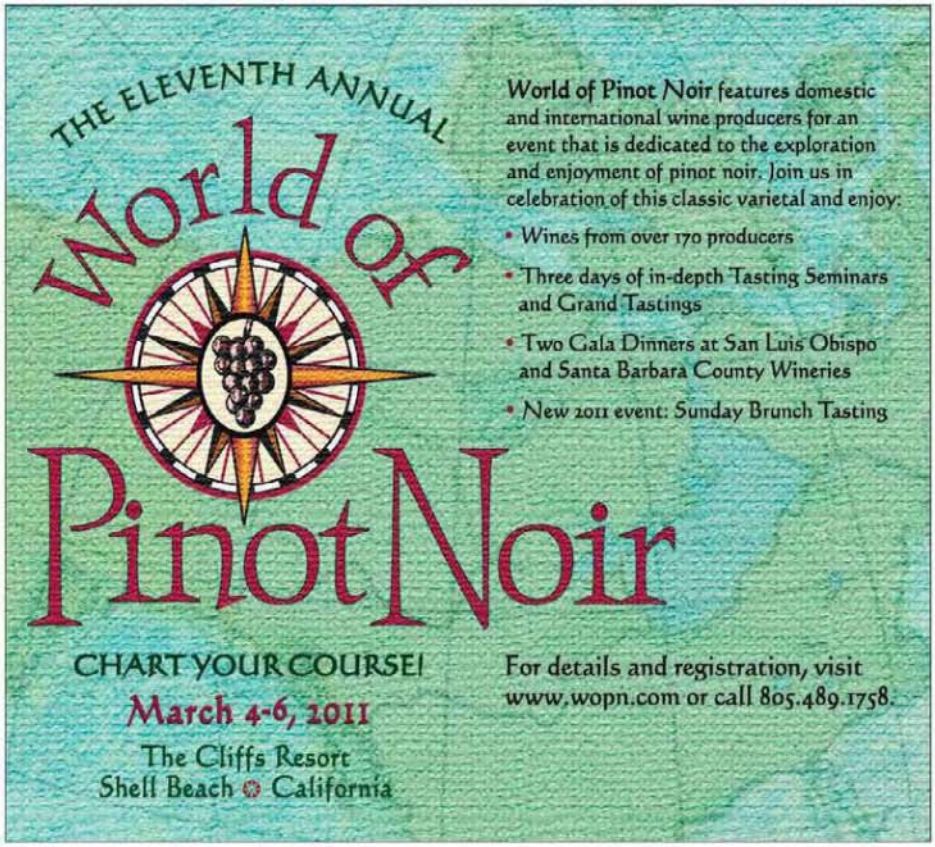
90 Martin Ray 2008 Reserve Bald Mountain Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); $30. Shows the upfront fruit and oak of the popular style of Chardonnay, but earns extra points for dryness, acidity, creaminess and minerality. The fruit veers toward delicious pineapples. Drink now with rich shellfish, Ahi tuna, lobster risotto. —S.H.

90 Sanford 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); $22. Made in the oaky-fruity style that makes some Chardonnays cloying, but saved by brisk acidity and a steely minerality that must come from chalk and rocks in the soil. The flavors are of pineapples and tangerines. —S.H.

88 La Crema 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $30. New oak gives a vanilla cream and buttered toast accent to this pretty wine, but the basic fruit flavors also are nice, offering varietal waves of pineapples, pears and green apples. It's a super-drinkable Chardonnay whose richness suggests elaborate fare, like shellfish. —S.H.

88 La Crema 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); $30. New oak (38%) vies with green apple butter and pineapple crême brulée flavors to dominate this wine, with neither winning out, suggesting that it's balanced. It's a very pretty, creamy, slightly sweet Chardonnay, balanced with brisk acidity. —S.H.

88 Nine Barrel 2007 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $70. New oak dominates this pleasant Chardonnay, with buttered toast, vanilla and caramelized buttercream notes that are almost sweet, although the wine is technically dry. The underlying flavors are of





pineapples, pears and green apples. It's holding up well for a 2007. From La Crema. —S.H.

87 Biltmore 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); $20. This is one of the drier Chardonnays out there. You won't find that fat, opulent Alexander Valley tropical fruit, but something more akin to Chablis. The flavors are of minerals and dried herbs, with background notes of pineapples, pears and oak. —S.H.

87 Buena Vista 2007 Dijon Clones Chardonnay (Carneros); $37. Made in the modern style of ripe fruit and elaborate oak, this rich, creamy Chardonnay features pineapple jam, peach pie and toasty vanilla flavors. It's a bit obvious, but lipsmackingly delicious. —S.H.

87 Gofessel 2009 Edina Chardonnay (Carneros); $35. The vineyard is on the Sonoma side of the Carneros. The wine is very dry and brisk in acidity, and its pineapple fruit flavors are grounded with minerals. Oak plays a subtle role. The winemaker calls it a premier cru Chablis-style wine, which is not a bad description, although it's only ageable for 2–3 years before it plunges downhill. —S.H.

87 Line 39 2009 Chardonnay (North Coast); $9. A very nice Chardonnay for fans of the ripe, oaky style, at a great price. It's rich in pineapple, cream and vanilla flavors, with zesty acidity and a honeyed finish. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

87 Pepperwood Grove 2008 Chardonnay (California); $7. You'll be amazed how rich and satisfying this Chardonnay is, given the everyday price. It stands next to far more expensive bottlings for opulence. The pineapple, buttercream and vanilla flavors are perfectly balanced with crisp acidity. Terrific value, with 21,000 cases produced. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

87 RouteStock Cellars 2009 Route 121 Chardonnay (Carneros); $15. The apricot and pear flavors are obviously very ripe, but they're balanced by brisk acidity, and a certain stong minerality you often find in Carneros Chardonnays. Oak plays its part. A bit obvious, but for the price, there's plenty of opulence. —S.H.

87 Valley of the Moon 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $16. You won't miss the influence of oak barrels at all on this Chardonnay because it's so rich in fruit. Dazzles the mouth with waves of pineapples, golden mangoes, ripe limes and sweet pears, balanced with crisp acidity. —S.H.

86 Buena Vista 2007 Ramal Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); $32. Here's a basically good California Chardonnay, made in the popular style. It's ripe in pineapple, orange and mango fruit, with an elaborate overlay of sweet, smoky oak. —S.H.

86 Gary Farrell 2008 Carneros Selection Chardonnay (Carneros); $32. Pretty simple in pineapple, orange and peach flavors, like a fruit juice drink you buy at the supermarket. Good acidity provides balance, but the wine remains straightforward. —S.H.

86 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2008 Gold Ridge Hills Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); $30. This super-ripe, oaky, leesy Chardonnay lacks subtlety, but packs plenty of power. It's enormously forward in apricot and pineapple fruit, with the custard, buttered popcorn and caramel flavors that come from barrel fermentation. Finishes with a brown sugar sweetness. —S.H.

86 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2008 Antonio Mountain Vineyard Aria Block Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); $45. Located in a very cool site, in a difficult environment, this vineyard needs a warmer vintage to succeed, which 2008 wasn't. The wine is high in acidity, almost sour, and the apricot flavors are intense and overpowering. Lots of new oak provides a welcome, softening richness, but the wine still tastes sharp and unbalanced. —S.H.

86 Waterstone 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); $18. Shows the vanilla and buttered toast notes from oak that people like, in addition to varietal flavors of pineapples, green apples and lemons. A bit one-dimensional, but will satisfy Chardonnay fans who want that rich creamy opulence. —S.H.

85 Fog Head 2008 Limestone Ridge Chardonnay (Monterey); $20. This Chardonnay is from the big San Bernabe Vineyard. It's rich and forward in pineapple jam, pear and lemon flavors. The oak seems overly elaborated, but it sure is opulent in vanilla and crême brulée. —S.H.

85 J Vineyards & Winery 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); $28. New oak constitutes 40% of the barrel regime, but it dominates, with toothpicky sweet, caramelized vanilla aromas and flavors. Beneath that is lemon and green apple fruit. Production was 8,000 cases. —S.H.

85 J. Lohr 2008 Riverstone Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco); $14. Brisk acidity marks this wine, giving it a mouthwatering quality, and the flavors veer toward lemons, limes and grapefruits, with a richer touch of nectarine and pear. It's a good, everyday Chardonnay, at a fair price. —S.H.

85 Jeff Gordon 2007 Ella Sofia Chardonnay (Carneros); $45. Sugary sweet in caramelized oak, pineapple jam and green apple flavors. Acidity fortunately provides some balance, but this is still is a pretty obvious wine meant to appeal to popular tastes. —S.H.

85 Kimmel 2008 Chardonnay (Mendocino); $32. Made in the predictably ripe, oaky style, this Chardonnay will satisfy certain fans, but it lacks subtlety and complexity. It's all about pineapple jam, buttered popcorn and sweet caramel. —S.H.

85 Pietra Santa 2008 Signature Collection Chardonnay (Cienega Valley); $35. As sweet as buttered popcorn and a pineapple-lemon tart dessert pastry. Will appeal to the popular style, but would benefit from greater dryness and nuance. —S.H.

85 Tangley Oaks 2007 Chardonnay (Central Coast); $15. With sweet, vanilla custard and buttered popcorn flavors piled onto the golden apricot and pineapple jam fruit, this Chardonnay is made in the popular style. It's refreshed with clean, crisp acidity. —S.H.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

92 Peter Franus 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $22. A brilliant Sauvignon Blanc, with racy acidity and a rich, creamy texture. Shows lemongrass, peach, melon and exotic tropical fruit flavors, and really gets

those tastebuds whistling. Shows a complexity rare in this variety. —S.H.

91 Emmolo 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $16. A deliciously zesty Sauvignon Blanc. It doesn't seem to have any oak, but you won't miss it, because there are wonderful vanilla, honeysuckle and buttered toast notes that enrich the peach, pineapple, green apple, honeydew melon and mineral flavors. Great price for a wine so rich and complex. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

91 Girard 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $16. So dry, so clean, so acidic and minerally, just a great version of a Loire-style Sauvignon Blanc. With little or no oak, it shows brilliant lemongrass, peach, vanilla and spice flavors. A wine that cleans and stimulates the palate, and a welcome addition to the top tier. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

91 Martin Ray 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); $20. What a lovely wine to sip as a cocktail. It's almost like a fino Sherry, with brisk acidity and a clean, salty tanginess that stimulates the mouth and prepares it for food. Shows a bone-dry minerality that undergirds the citrus and lemongrass flavors. Really fine, with controlled alcohol. Production was 1,366 cases. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 Bernardus 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Monterey County); $16. Dry and crisply acidic, this wine shows racy tropical citrus fruit, gooseberry and green grass flavors. Benefits from some barrel-fermented Sémillon that adds a desirable creaminess and nutty, buttery richness. The result is wonderfully drinkable. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 Ehlers Estate 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (St. Helena); $28. Made with no oak, this 100% Sauvignon Blanc shows the way the variety's flavors develop in the winery's estate vineyard in St. Helena. Those totally dry flavors are of Meyer lemons, lemongrass, melons, golden mangoes and perfectly ripe pears, and they are boosted by mouthwateringly crisp acidity. A lovely wine that shows how well Sauvignon Blanc can do in Napa's flatlands that are unsuitable for Cabernet Sauvignon. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 Geyser Peak 2009 Block Collection River Ranches Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); $20. Wow. What a nice white wine. It may have a little oak—the winery doesn't say—but it's basically stainless steel-fermented, which allows the Meyer lemon, lime, peach and papaya flavors to star. Brightened with crisp acidity, it's beautiful as a cocktail sipper, and with shrimp cocktail, pot stickers, a nice roast chicken. Contains 2% Viognier. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

90 J. Lohr 2009 Carol's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $24. Nice and dry, with a crisp cut of acidity that gets those tastebuds whistling. If you like gooseberries, it's for you, although there are far richer tropical fruit flavors in this lovely wine. The vineyard is in St. Helena. —S.H.

89 Raymond 2009 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $15. This is an extremely dry, tartly acidic wine whose lime and grapefruit flavors are inflected with gooseberries and stony minerals. Made with no oak, it's a clean, brisk palate cleanser that's versatile at the table, and affordable. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

88 Azur 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); $26. This is a lovely Sauvignon Blanc that shows enough elegance and finesse to serve with fine food. It's dry and crisp, with citrus, lemongrass, gooseberry and mineral flavors. Nice with tempura appetizers. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

88 Gary Farrell 2009 Redwood Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); $25. A tasty Sauvignon Blanc, with crisply acidic grapefruit, pineapple and lime juice flavors, touched with oak. A nice appetizer sipper, with some complexity. Good with asparagus risotto, bruschetta with goat cheese, a nice roast chicken with sautéed new potatoes and rosemary. —S.H.

87 Clif Family 2009 Rte. Blanc Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $18. A very pretty Sauvignon Blanc marked by slightly sweet, citrus jam, lemongrass and vanilla flavors, but saved by vital acidity. The sweetness suggests pairing with Chinese or Vietnamese food. —S.H.

87 Courtney Benham 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $16. A lovely, elegant wine whose dryness and acidity make it perfect for a late afternoon cocktail. The lemon, lime, grapefruit and vanilla flavors finish a



little thin, but this is a very nice Sauvignon Blanc for the price. —S.H.

87 Decoy 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $18. This is a delightfully crisp, drily balanced Sauvignon Blanc that's perfect as a cocktail sipper with little appetizers. Made without any oak influence, it shows the variety's grapefruit, Meyer lemon, lime and grassy side, along with zesty acidity. ***Editors' Choice.*** —S.H.

87 Foppiano 2009 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); $18. A nice apéritif wine, bone dry and mouthwateringly crisp in acidity, with clean lemon, lime and grapefruit flavors. Good with traditional shrimp cocktail, oysters on the shell, toast rounds with goat cheese and grilled veggies. —S.H.

87 Kendall-Jackson 2009 Grand Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Mendocino County); $20. A nice, bright and savory Sauvignon Blanc, rich in fruit but dry on the finish. Shows waves of Meyer lemon, pineapple, kiwi, honeysuckle and vanilla flavors, accented with a touch of oak. Enjoyable on its own or with little appetizers. —S.H.

87 Whitehall Lane 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $16. Fruity and fresh in Meyer lemons that taste baked into a pie, with vanilla, cinnamon and smoky pie crust flavors. For all the richness, the wine is dry and zesty in acidity. An easy, delightful wine as a cocktail, with spicy little appetizers. —S.H.

86 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2009 Laguna Vista Vineyards Sur Lees Selection Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma Coast); $18. Fancy name for a somewhat simple wine. It's sweet in jammy pineapples, Meyer lemons, limes and tangerines, with a creamy texture and a cloying sweetness. Would benefit from greater dryness and minerality. —S.H.

86 Turning Leaf 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (California); $8. Good for Turning Leaf for making this wine as dry and crisp as it is. Goes against the sweet style in favor of restraint, showing citrus, grass and vanilla flavors, with mouthwatering acidity. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

85 Broman 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $17. A bone-dry Sauvignon Blanc that's high in acidity, with a racy mouthfeel. It has lemongrass and gooseberry flavors, and a touch of that green, feline note that you may not like. —S.H.

85 Fetzer 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California); $9. Tasty, with green apple tart, lemon pie filling and sour pineapple candy flavors. Zesty acidity makes it clean. Finishes kind of sweet, but it's a nice sipper with salty-sweet foods, like ham and cured meats. ***Best Buy.*** —S.H.

85 Rock Wall 2008 Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); $18. Enormously sweet, with honeyed flavors of golden apricot, lemon custard, pineapple crême brulée and vanilla meringue. Delicious, but lacking in vibrant acidity for balance. —S.H.

85 Rodney Strong 2009 Charlotte's Home Sauvignon Blanc (Northern Sonoma); $13. Tasted in June, this Sauvignon Blanc had some unresolved fizziness. It's basically dry and zesty in acidity, with refreshing lemongrass, pineapple, spearmint gum, green melon and vanilla flavors. A tiny bit of oak adds welcome richness. —S.H.

WASHINGTON RED WINES

CABERNETS & BLENDS

96 Grand Rêve 2007 Collaboration Series Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); $75. The purity is astonishing—a ringing bell of vivid, racy blueberry, blackberry and black cherry fruit. The 100% new French oak is completely absorbed into the wine, its flavors unobtrusive. The essence of the vineyard and the grape, this is a must-taste for lovers of Cabernet Sauvignon and Red Mountain. Sleek, tight, extremely youthful but polished and dense. —P.G.

95 Mark Ryan 2007 Lonely Heart Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); $75. The first reserve from this winery, this is the most structured, dense and tightly layered Mark Ryan wine to date. It has the density and compact structure of Quilceda Creek, with perhaps just a shade less concentration. Aromatically complex, you can pick out early details of seed, coffee, pepper, chocolate and tobacco around the dense cassis, plum and cherry fruit. But this wine is truly a baby, and should not be touched for a decade or more. ***Cellar Selection.*** —P.G.

94 Efesté 2007 Big Papa Old Block Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $45. This pure Cabernet is almost jet black in color, displaying full-on aromatics of bramble and berry, suffused with earth and herb. Tannins are muscular and beautifully honed. Decant and let it breathe a few hours; the fruit expands with lush flavors of wild blackberries and cassis, dappled with light herb, and moving into a rich finish of clove, chocolate and espresso. —P.G.

94 Mark Ryan 2007 Long Haul Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Wine (Red Mountain); $45. Here is a mouth-pleasing blend of 66% Merlot and 34% Cab Franc that builds the wine from the aromas out. The Merlot brings lush black cherry fruit to a broad midpalate, while the Cab Franc chimes in with roasted coffee and dark chocolate notes. The mix is perfect, tongue-coating and satisfying, right on through a long, peppery finish. —P.G.

93 Grand Rêve 2006 Collaboration Series I Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Wine (Red Mountain); $55. Very fragrant and surprisingly soft upon entry, this blend ultimately lives up to the vintage's reputation for compact, unyielding red wines. This wine, made by Cadence's Ben Smith, manages to be both approachable and at the same time cellar-worthy. Cassis, plum, and the vineyard's characteristic minerality thrust up through the palate like basalt monoliths. —P.G.

93 Reasons 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills); $35. A mix of small lot-fermented, Horse Heaven Hills Cabernet Sauvignon, some from Champoux, it's fine-tuned, varietal, loaded with cassis and plum, light toast, and ground coffee. Elegant, proportionate, and a fine expression of a great vintage. —P.G.

93 Reininger 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); $38. From a near-perfect vintage, this is a sleek, stylish,

refined Cabernet. It is less forward and broadly fruity than past Reiningers, but showcases the strengths of the vintage—grip, elegance, detail, and balance. There is plenty of fruit – black cherry and cassis – with layers of smoke, anise, coffee, and bitter chocolate. Still quite tight and young, this is a wine to cellar and enjoy for a decade or more. ***Cellar Selection.*** —P.G.

93 Walla Walla Vintners 2007 Vineyard Select Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); $48. The Vineyard Select is made only on occasion. As in 2006, the cuvée includes a splash of Petit Verdot. From the extraordinary 2007 vintage, this wine has it all: depth, polish and panache. The richly fruity nose brings on the berries and cherries; they fill the palate and add layers of fig, plum, chocolate and coconut. ***Cellar Selection.*** —P.G.

92 Efesté 2007 Final-Final Cabernet-Syrah (Columbia Valley); $25. Deep purple/black, it explodes into lush fruit flavors of tangy boysenberry, blackberry, black cherry and cassis, with a smoky black licorice streak woven through. The tannin management is exceptional here—firm and substantial, without any bitter or green aspect. This is a supple, powerful, and age-worthy wine with depth and muscle unusual in this price range. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

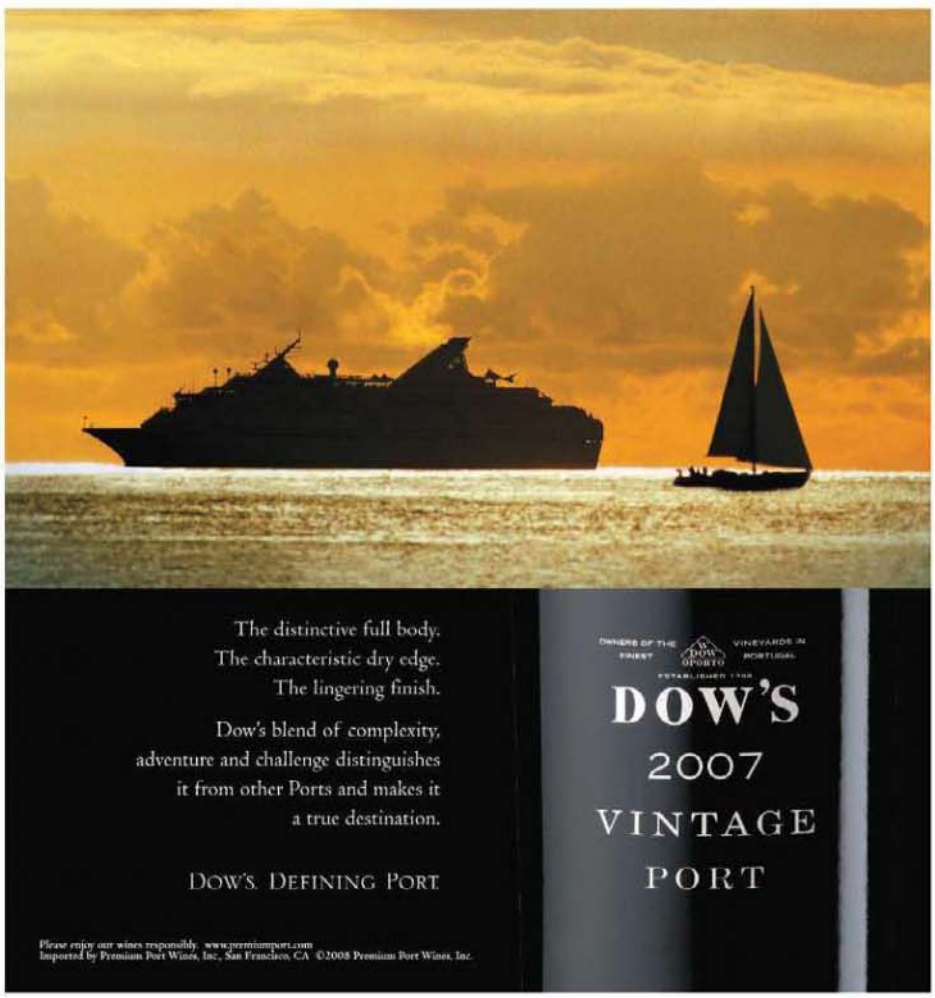
91 Forgeron 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $30. Winemaker Marie-Eve Gilla adds just 5% Malbec to the blend, "to fill in the middle fruit," she explains. Just released prior to this tasting, it was still quite tight, with a hard shell around the black fruits. Dried herbs and sweet grain highlights add complexity, and the mix of vineyards (Pepper Bridge, Klipsun, and Alder Ridge) brings the best characteristics of three different AVAs into play. ***Cellar Selection.*** —P.G.

91 Gordon Brothers 2008 Six Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $50. The name references the clone number for this single-clone Cabernet Sauvignon. Since it is also a single-vineyard estate wine, it captures terroir in a meaningful expression. Still young, sharply defined and tannic, it is showing a lot of barrel flavors, especially clove. The Cabernet fruit is right in line with Gordon Brothers style, capturing the herbal aspects of the grape, in perfect balance, with a beautiful mix of cassis, earth and fresh, sweet herb. Very limited. —P.G.

91 Mark Ryan 2007 Water Witch Klipsun Vineyard Red Wine (Red Mountain); $45. Ripe red raspberry fruit fills the nose; this seems more fruit forward than most other Klipsun designates. The tannins have been wrangled into submission, giving the wine good balance immediately, while preserving the acidity and tannic depth to age well. The blend is 57% Cabernet Sauvignon and 43% Merlot—a classic, un-fussy, straight-ahead Red Mountain style. —P.G.

91 Mark Ryan 2007 Dead Horse Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Wine (Red Mountain); $45. A firm, juicy mix of cranberry, cherry and cassis fruits. Fresh garden herbs are followed with a hint of green coffee bean, the tannins tight and a bit hard. Unyielding at first, this is structured for medium-term aging, with just a bit of alcoholic heat in the finish. —P.G.

91 Syzygy 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $36. A young, tight wine, with a strong mint/herbal component,



and a little hint of bacon fat. This is a lovely expression of Cabernet, neither jammy nor sweet, but showing nuanced details that range through a wide mix of mushroom, herb, stone and loam. Which is not to discount the fruit—tart, spicy, and vivid, with a profusion of wild berries. ***Cellar Selection.*** —P.G.

91 Upland Estates 2007 Old Vine Cabernet Sauvignon (Snipes Mountain); $28. From 35-year-old vines, this dark, smoky, exotically aromatic Cabernet spent 22 months in American oak, and not too surprisingly that oak influence is still being absorbed, with some rough edges. The fruit is full, lightly (and most agreeably) herbal, supple with blueberry and boysenberry dominating. Give it extra breathing time or better still another year or two in the cellar, and it will smooth out considerably. —P.G.

90 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2007 McKinley Springs Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Washington); $28. Deep, fruity and still a bit closed down, it brings supple black cherry and cassis fruit, tightly wrapped with hints of layering. Mineral, graphite, smoke, earth, licorice, clove and more seem to be lurking beneath the surface. Give it extra breathing time, or cellar for 8 – 10 years. —P.G.

90 Gordon Brothers 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $23. All estate-grown, this beautifully crafted Cabernet is a fine expression of Columbia Valley fruit. It's lifted with juicy berry and black cherry flavors, then expanded with notes of cola, earth, leaf, herb and roasted coffee. Everything is in proportion, and the overall impression is of balance and elegance; depth without excess. It's a style of Cabernet that may have fallen out of favor, but shows exceptional grape growing and winemaking skills. —P.G.

90 NxNW 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $25. A mix of Columbia Valley vineyards contributed to this Bordeaux blend, which opens aromatically with dusty red fruits, a silky mouthfeel, soft tannins and a moderate level of alcohol (14%). Immediately likeable, with mulberry/blackberry fruit, pretty chocolate and a whiff of smoke, but this could be cellared for another six or eight years. —P.G.

90 Reininger 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); $38. Polished and varietal, this shows the skills of winemaker Chuck Reininger. The 2006 vintage produced tight, hard-edged, herbal wines, ageworthy but unyielding. But here it has been honed and softened, so that its Bordeaux-like traits are emphasized, with plenty of herbal character and spicy purple fruits. Still coming out of its shell, this is a wine to cellar and drink with a big, grilled steak. —P.G.

90 Robert Ramsay 2007 Upland Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Yakima Valley); $38. A solid, earthy, dusty, lightly leathery Cabernet Sauvignon. Though perhaps not technically perfect, it captures the palate



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imagination with texture and detail, and a light touch which keeps the alcohol around 14% and the tannins proportionate. No massive new oak here either, though the (virtually impossible to read) back label notes that it was made in 100% French oak, half of it new. —P.G.

88 Kestrel 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); $22. True to the vintage, this is a rather hard and chewy Cabernet, yet it captures both varietal and vintage character in a style that is ready for that sizzling steak off the grill. Lightly herbal, with black cherry, cassis, coffee and bitter chocolate streaks, it's a firm and well-balanced wine with the potential to age over the next decade or so. —P.G.

86 Canyon's Edge 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills); $18. Though relatively lightweight, this pleasant Cabernet Sauvignon is drinking well, with cherry and plum, chocolate and a little caramel. The tannins have some grip and persistence. —P.G.

86 Kestrel 2005 Signature Edition Raptor Red (Yakima Valley); $60. The Raptor Red, made in limited quantities, is Kestrel's most expensive wine. It's an interesting Bordeaux blend, and incorporates some old vine fruit. Subtle flavors include a rich mix of fresh herbs, earth and lightly-ripened berries, swathed in substantial new oak. —P.G.

86 Silver Lake 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rattlesnake Hills); $12. Fresh and varietal, this brings focused scents of berry and bramble, with some tobacco highlights. It's soft in the midpalate, showing black cherry and red licorice components, then turns astringent and tannic through the finish. —P.G.

85 Silver Lake 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rattlesnake Hills); $12. Simple and straightforward, with a deep purple/plum tone that belies the rather light flavors. This shows tart black cherry fruit with herbal highlights. Tannins have been rough-sanded but are still on the noticeably green and astringent side. A good, everyday steak wine. —P.G.

85 Silver Lake 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Rattlesnake Hills); $10. The winemakers have done a good job of taking the green tannins and herbal flavors down a notch or two, leaving a dry, astringent wine which might slip comfortably into a tasting of inexpensive Chilean Cabernet or Carmenère. Like those wines, it should prosper if accompanied by a hanger steak. ***Best Buy.*** —P.G.

MERLOT

91 Forgeron 2005 Merlot (Columbia Valley); $27. Always a favorite from this Walla Walla producer, the 2005 Merlot includes about 6% Cabernet Franc. Firm and muscular, with a dense core of blackberry, black cherry and cassis, it sprinkles in ground coffee and a streak of licorice. The style is deep, dark, laced with graphite, and definitely built for long-term cellaring. —P.G.

91 Walla Walla Vintners 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla); $28. Supple and detailed, this delightful Merlot has more grip than most non-Washington Merlots in this price range, and the fruit, though ripe, brings with it a wild, untamed character. Cherries, golden raisins and figs fill the palate, then glide into a milk chocolate-slathered finish. —P.G.

88 Helix by Reininger 2007 Merlot (Columbia Valley); $25. Smooth and fruity, this forward and pleasing effort pushes berries and lightly candied red fruits to the front of the palate, adding some hot cinnamon spice to the middle. It's vibrant and charming, but with more depth than most Merlots done in this style. A hint of green tea slips into the tannins. —P.G.

87 Red Sky 2007 Merlot (Washington); $28. Conner Lee vineyard was the fruit source, and new oak barrels (from Minnesota) were used during the aging of the wine. It is already softening and maturing, the fruit showing secondary characteristics of baked fig and plum. The oak is sharply defined, but coming into balance. The midpalate extends with coffee, licorice and smoke, then turns a bit alcoholic as it fades. —P.G.

87 Reininger 2006 Merlot (Walla Walla); $36. This mix of Pepper Bridge, Seven Hills and Ash Hollow fruit includes 16% Cabernet Sauvignon and a splash of Malbec. Two thirds of the barrels were American oak. Still resolving, it shows some chewy, herbal, slightly bitter edges around softer, moderately ripe and plummy fruit. —P.G.

85 Silver Lake 2008 Merlot (Rattlesnake Hills); $12. Reliable as usual, this soft, cherry and vanilla-flavored Merlot is pure varietal, fruity and ready to drink immediately. The tannins are extremely light, though a hint of green wood sneaks into the finish. Don't look for depth, but for a drink-now, perfectly pleasant quaffer, this is a good bet. —P.G.

SANGIOVESE

92 Helix by Reininger 2006 Sangiovese (Columbia Valley); $30. Yummy is the first word that comes to mind, followed by sounds of lip smacking. It's a rich bundle of extracted cherry and raspberry fruit, driven deep with juicy acidity, and bound with ripe tannins. The penetration and vivid tartness are remarkable, and supremely satisfying. —P.G.

88 Walla Walla Vintners 2008 Sangiovese (Columbia Valley); $24. Tart and sappy, like fresh raspberry/cranberry juice, this wine displays the vivid acidity that



occurs naturally in the grape, along with some peppery herb from the addition of 8% Syrah and 9% Malbec. It's wild and young, with a finish that tastes like fresh herbs from the garden. —P.G.

SYRAH

92 Syzygy 2007 Syrah (Walla Walla); $33. Pure varietal, Washington-grown Syrah, with a beguiling mix of citrus, spicy plum, and red licorice. The citrus component really shines through in the mouth, with juicy acidity that includes orange peel and pink grapefruit flavors. The acids underscore polished blueberry and blackberry fruit, with a penetrating finish that adds dark chocolate and espresso. Deceptive at first; let it breathe. —P.G.

91 Grand Rêve 2007 Collaboration Series III Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Wine Syrah (Red Mountain); $45. Crafted by Mark McNeilly (Mark Ryan winery), this pure Syrah was cellared in about one third new oak. Tasted shortly after its release, it still showed a bit of a liquorous new oak scent, but without turning up the heat in the finish. The fruit is young and bright, a mix of raspberry, cassis and red licorice. —P.G.

91 Syzygy 2006 Syrah (Walla Walla); $33. Sharp and penetrating, vertically structured, and just now coming out of its youthful shell, the 2006 is beginning to show its long-term aging potential. Compact blueberry and blackberry fruit comes with a hint of black olive; it's ripe, quite firm and wrapped into chewy tannins and natural acids, with a lemony finish. —P.G.

90 Efesté 2007 Ceidleigh Syrah (Red Mountain); $34. Pronounced Kay-lee, this Red Mountain Syrah remains a bit tight and tannic, with hints of green tea in the finish. The fruit is tart and compact, with a nose of blueberry and brown sugar. Tannins are quite hard and slightly bitter; this will require some further cellaring. —P.G.

89 Efesté 2007 Jolie Bouche Syrah (Yakima Valley); $34. This smells lightly of barnyard, what the French elegantly call goût de merde character. Firm and poised between sweet berry fruit and earthy funk, it fills in the back end with graphite and hints of gravel. Flavors are complex but overall this feels a little light, especially in the finish. —P.G.

89 Helix by Reininger 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); $27. This captures the gamy, herbal, earthy complexity of Washington Syrah, but mutes it somewhat behind a wall of raspberry fruit. Not a bad combo by any means! This one carries some stemmy flavors into the finish. Just enough to put a hard edge on it. —P.G.

89 Reininger 2007 Syrah (Walla Walla); $41. Pure Syrah from Pepper Bridge, Seven Hills and Ash Hollow vineyard fruit, this shows the maturing of Walla Walla vines, which more and more reveal the earthy, herbal, garrigue qualities of the grape. Coopered in neutral oak, it showcases the typicity and regionality of the grape. Funk, earth, seaweed, green tobacco, and a hint of pepper dominate. You might wish for more fruit, but for those who love the funk this is a fine bottle. —P.G.

88 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2007 Syrah (Washington); $28. It's a fine effort, with classic Washington Syrah character. Berry, funk, mushroom, and spicy herb dominate, with plenty of juicy acidity and the structure to unwind as it cellars. Still tight and tannic, this is a wine to decant or, better yet, wait a few years before opening. —P.G.

88 Mark Ryan 2007 Wild Eyed Syrah (Red Mountain); $48. The use of 75% new oak applies a thick coating of vanilla over the fruit, which nonetheless is in plentiful supply, sweet, sappy and delicious. Immense black cherry and cassis turns a bit liquorous in the mouth, with streaks of tobacco, lots of vanilla and some finishing heat. —P.G.

88 Robert Ramsay 2006 Syrah (Horse Heaven Hills); $35. This looks appealing right as it's being poured from the bottle. Deep blue/purple, it flows like honey, with a suppleness that suggests good things to come. Sniff—it's loaded with spicy, herbal, lightly funky Syrah character. Swirl—it gathers power and strength. Sip—this is Washington Syrah alright, with plenty of composty herb and funk, truffle and herb, but wrapped in deep black fruits. The acids leave a finish that is chalky and artificial, the only barrier to a higher score. —P.G.

88 Woodinville Wine Cellars 2007 Chandler Reach Vineyard Syrah (Yakima Valley); $30. This is a good effort – showing a balanced mix of wild berries, plums, earth, a hint of caramel, and a lingering finish with milk chocolate and nougat. All the Yakima Valley flavors are there, though still a bit muted. But it's on its way. —P.G.

87 Snoqualmie 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); $10. Snoqualmie can legitimately lay claim to being Washington's most consistent and reliable producer of mass market, value-priced wines. This tart and racy Syrah is a fine example of the quality—no frills, but no fudging either. It tastes like fruit—blueberries and boysenberries, with some leafy, herbal tannins. In perfect balance, it's a fine every day wine with more flavor interest than most ten buck merlots and cabs. ***Best Buy.*** —P.G.

86 Seia 2007 Clifton Hill Vineyard Syrah (Wahluke Slope); $30. Opening with scents of mushroom compost and moist earth, this continues into a rather thin, sharp midpalate. The fruit is not-quite-ripe wild berry, and the earthy characteristics continue to dominate. It tastes more like a Yakima Valley Syrah than a Wahluke Slope Syrah, and finishes with a burst of mild heat. —P.G.

85 Dussek Family Cellars 2007 Syrah (Rattlesnake Hills); $20. An interesting nose mixes purple fruits with a spicy mint note. Vanilla and tobacco take over the midpalate, perhaps just the new oak barrel flavors still being integrated. At the moment the fruit is austere, the tannins dry, the wine dominated by vanilla and tobacco flavors. —P.G.

85 Kestrel 2006 Winemaker Select Co-Ferment Estate Syrah (Yakima Valley); $40. A spicy, sharply defined Syrah, this is streaked with a strong flavor of clove. The fruit is light and suggests blueberries, but there are stronger flavors of vanilla and tobacco that dominate. A bit of heat slips into the finish, as the fruit quickly fades. —P.G.

85 NxNW 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); $30. Simple, fruity and forward, this pleasant Syrah seems to fade quickly. It's got a lot of color and a light varietal mix of herb, earth, fungus and berry. —P.G.

Spirits

RYE REVIVAL

Clearly, we're in the throes of a rye revival. Mixologists are in love with rye right now, since it was the spirit used in pre-Prohibition cocktails, and are crafting it into proper Sazeracs and Juleps, as well as creative riffs on classic Old-Fashioneds and Manhattans.

Frankly, rye is not an easy spirit to love. It's an American whiskey, like Bourbon, and oak-barrel aging imparts to both pleasing caramel-like aromas and brown coloring.

But the similarity ends there, and so I think of rye and Bourbon as distant cousins rather than identical twins. The mash bill—that recipe of corn, rye and other grains—makes all the difference. Where Bourbon is at least 51% corn, and has a characteristic mellow sweetness as a result, rye must be at least 51% rye—and that rye component means spice, and a bold, big-time bite.

Did I say 51% rye? That's just the bare minimum. In sampling through ryes, I tried some with ever-higher rye percentages and landed on one that's a whopping 100% rye whiskey: WhistlePig. Though the name, a euphemism for groundhogs, gives me the giggles it's simply named for WhistlePig Farm in Vermont, where the product is bottled (it's distilled in Canada).

As a former master distiller for Maker's Mark Bourbon, WhistlePig distiller/partner Dave Pickerell is keenly aware of difference between Bourbon and rye. After leaving Maker's Mark, Pickerell spent a year studying microdistilling, and enjoying "a magical mystery tour" in search of the best rye in the world. Eventually, he partnered with entrepreneur Raj Peter Bhakta (best known for his stint as a contestant on *The Apprentice*) to create his vision of the holy grail: 100% rye, and 100 proof.

"Rye is full-flavored, spicy—when you dilute it with other grains, it confounds it," Pickerell says of his distilling decision. He describes the drinking experience as "fireworks in your mouth." Say what? "Spices pop out so quickly—anise, clove, allspice—you can pick them out like individual fireworks, or you can settle back and enjoy the show." Athough I didn't experience fireworks when I tried Whistlepig, it did turn out to be one of my favorites—a rye surprisingly easy to love.

—Kara Newman

96 WhistlePig Straight Rye Whiskey (WhistlePig Farm Distillery, Shoreham, VT, U.S.); 50% abv, $70. First, a warning: this is only for those who like their rye big and brawny. It starts off innocuously with a maple-syrup color, and a pretty, complex and subtle scent: honey, vanilla, a sight medicinal tinge and faint clover notes. It feels silky on the tongue and at first, the flavors reflect caramel, burnt orange and a whisper of smoke, but then a mouth-warming wave of tannic bite sweeps over all and lingers for a good long time. Straight up or on the rocks.

96 Rendezvous Rye (High West Distillery, Salt Lake City, UT, U.S.) 46% abv, $50. Strong but intriguing. Medium color and body, with rich aromas of burnt orange and caramel. The flavor also reflected burnt orange and caramel, plus a spicy tinge reminiscent of cassia bark or Red-Hot candies. The finish lingers, pleasant, inviting and warm. Might be good for Manhattans—a touch of fruit or sweetness would go well with this rye. Excellent value.

95 Hudson Manhattan Rye Whiskey (Tuthilltown Spirits, Gardiner, NY, U.S.) 46% abv, $36/375 ml. Balanced, light and versatile, and likely a good foil for cocktails. Smoky fragrance with hints of caramel and dried apricots. The golden color, medium weight and flavors pleasantly evoke maple syrup and caramel at first, although zingy, oaky flavors soon follow. With ice, the wood becomes more pronounced. A nice, smooth and dry finish lingers but doesn't overstay its welcome.

94 Russell's Reserve 6 Year Old Rye Whiskey (Austin, Nichols Distilling Company, Lawrenceburg, KY, U.S.) 45% abv, $25. Silky, smooth and syrupy, with a lightness that would lend itself to a Sazerac. Light tawny golden color, scent of vanilla, oranges and, faintly, peaches. Caramel flavors wind up into a pleasantly warm and smooth finish.

93 Rittenhouse Very Rare 25-Year-Old Straight Rye Whiskey (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Bardstown, KY, U.S.) 50% abv, $190. Complex and bold, with a deep amber color. This one is 100 proof, and won't let you forget it—the alcohol hits right on the nose, but so does a concentrated deep toffee and coffee-ground fragrance. The flavor hints at sweetness at first, then opens up to oak, caramel and spice. The finish is smooth, with lots of lingering caramel, but also a powerful bite. This is a beautiful example of what an aged rye can be, and it probably would have rated even higher if it weren't so powerfully alcoholic.

93 Michter's 10-Year Old Single Barrel Rye Whiskey (Michter's American Whiskey Co., Bardstown, KY, U.S.) 46.4% abv, $100. Dark amber color, strongly and sweetly aromatic with hints of cigar tobacco and allspice. Pleasant, deep toffee flavors almost threaten to turn sweet, but the finish is brisk, brief and dry. Medium body.

90 Jim Beam Rye (James B. Beam Distilling Co., Frankfort, KY, U.S.) 40% abv, $20. This rye has a classic profile—a bit of spice, light flavor and good structure. Sweet caramel and aromas faded surprisingly quickly. Flavors featured vanilla and tannic black tea, and finished with alcohol bite and a caramel finish.

90 Wild Turkey Rye Whiskey (Austin, Nichols Distilling Company, Lawrenceburg, KY, U.S), 50.5% abv, $24. The kickin' chicken was a total chameleon: on the first pass, it reflected deep, round, almost sweet aromas, like fruitcake and spice, and equally sweet flavors of toffee and orange peel. But on the second pass, especially with ice, it became more brisk, dry, and light. However, the lingering, tannic bite and orange-amber color remained constant.

88 Redemption Rye (Bardstown Barrel Selections, Bardstown, KY, U.S.) abv 46%, $25. This high-rye spirit (close to 95% rye) is manly and rugged, like chewing on saddle leather. Elegant, straight-edge bottle design. Golden color and medium body. Aromas evoked burnt orange peel and ripe cheeses, while the flavors were boldly oaky and bitter, with notes of tobacco, leather and black tea. Dry, short, stinging finish.

85 Templeton Rye (Infinium Spirits, Templeton, IA, U.S.) 40% abv, $40. Medium-amber color, citrusy aromas opening up to caramel scent. Big flavors of tobacco, oak, and leather lead to a lingering, tannic, alcoholic and slightly bitter finish. Cocktail purists will love the label showing old-time gentlemen in hats tippling at the bar.

Beer

THE BLACK DUST SETTLES FOR NEW IPAS

It's always exciting when something new emerges on the beverage scene. Just when you think to yourself, "There's nothing that hasn't been done," some winemaker, distiller or brewer turns the world upside down with invention. It could be a crazy ingredient that's never been used before, or a new aging technique involving some highly sought-after, limited-edition barrels. Sometimes, like catching a shooting star, you hit the big one and witness the evolution of a new style altogether.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the newest beer style to officially hit the streets: American-style India Black Ale.

Never heard of it? Well, although the name American-style India Black Ale was included in the Great American Beer Festival Style Guidelines for 2010, the debate over the name for the style has been raging for quite some time. The crux of the issue: where did the brew originate?

These brews aren't new, they're just newly popular. In fact, sources trace its roots back to the early 1990s when Vermont-based brewing icon Greg Noonan developed Blackwatch, a Black IPA. Since then, multiple examples have followed, including Alchemist's El Jefe Black IPA in 2003 and Stone's Sublimely Self Righteous Ale in 2007.

Then a movement developed in the Pacific Northwest for a new breed of the brew. Called Cascadian Dark Ale, these beers carried the same basic genetic makeup as already existing Black IPA offerings but focused heavily on the regionality of the brew and where the ingredients were sourced from ("Cascadia" referring to the Cascade Mountain Range, near where Cascade hops are grown).

Then came Oakshire Brewing with their O'Dark:30, the first bottled beer clearly labeled Cascadian Dark Ale, and the drama really began. Northeast brewers were insulted, while Pacific Northwest brewers were just trying to develop something unique and localized of their own. A compromise had to be found.

Enter the Brewers' Association, who recognized the need for peace as well as official style labeling and recognition. And so, the American-Style India Black Ale was born and entered into the 2010 Style Guidelines for the Great American Beer Festival.

We have one of each name reviewed this month, and make sure to be on the lookout for all of the style's aliases (CDA, Black IPA, IBA) at your local retailer. We also have a fantastic and readily available Dunkelweizen (dark wheat beer) as well as some fruit beers to round it all out.

Prost!

—Lauren Buzzeo

AMERICAN-STYLE INDIA BLACK ALE

94 Deschutes Hop in the Dark Cascadian Dark Ale (American-Style India Black Ale; Deschutes Brewery, OR); 6.5%, $5/22 oz. Pours a dense near-black color with a little transparency around the edges and a chocolate-colored head that falls somewhat quickly and leaves little lacing. The nose is loaded with pine-resin hops along with notes of maple syrup, milk chocolate and spiced soft caramel squares. The mouth is big, full and roasty with a ton of rich malt and biscuit flavors followed by a touch of hop bitterness coming through on the finish. Very tasty and attractive, with the playful balance of the roasted malt flavors and vibrant hop citrus and astringency keeping things lively and interesting. Tons of roasted arrabica beans and fudgy brownie unfold on the long finish.

90 21st Amendment Brewery Back in Black Black IPA (American-Style India Black Ale; 21st Amendment Brewery, CA); 6.8% abv, $NA/12 oz 6 pack cans. A very dark brown color in the glass with a touch of transparency and a finger's-worth of off-white head. The bouquet is warm and inviting with a lively citrus hop presence along with accents of pine, chicory root and soft winter spice. Effervescent and forward, the assertive hop astringency is countered by a roasted malt and coffee-infused finish. Notes of red grape, crusty bread and toasted barley add complexity to the palate. The body is light to medium, making it unbelievably easy to drink for a beer at almost 7% abv.

DUNKELWEIZEN

93 Ayinger Ur-Weisse Authentic Bavarian Dunkel Weizen (Dunkelweizen; Brauerei Aying, Germany); 5.8%, $4/500 ml. A hazy, watered-down coffee with cream color in the glass and a huge fluffy head that lingers. Strong, raw-dough, yeasty aromas and fresh banana mingle with clove and a hint of caramel sauce in the nose. Full bodied and highly carbonated with the same aromas carrying through to the palate with banana peel and bubble gum on the end. The lingering finish is reminiscent of baked apples with brown sugar and a rich, malty sweetness. Flavorful, well-balanced and easy to enjoy; a great companion for holiday fare.

FRUIT BEER

88 Bon Secours Framboise (Fruit Beer; Brasserie Caulier, Belgium); 7.0% abv, $11/330 ml. A very pretty pour with a hazy pink-peach hue and a large ecru head. The bouquet is slightly medicinal but fruity with powerful notes of dried raspberries, hard nectarine slices and slightly sour yeast. Tart and puckering in the mouth, it transitions from the tangy underripe fruit and lemony citrus to the juicy raspberry flavors nicely, with a dry sweetness lingering through the finish. Dry and tangy, but very refreshing.

87 Bon Secours Myrtille (Fruit Beer; Brasserie Caulier, Belgium); 7.0% abv, $11/330 ml. Light brown and cloudy in color with a slight pink hue. Smells like small blueberries with a touch of black currant and iris florals. There's also a hint of sourness. High carbonation in the mouth with a less assertive fruit character than the nose suggests; with the alcohol, it almost comes off a touch medicinal. The finish is all bitter blueberry skins. Worth a go for folks who like their fruit beers dry, not sweet.

87 He'Brew Rejewvenator Year of the Grape Harvest to Harvest Ale (Fruit Beer; Schmaltz Brewing Co, CA); 8.2% abv, $5/22 oz. This is actually a half doppelbock, half Belgian-style dubbel-based beer that's brewed with Concord grape juice. The alcohol is high and there's an all-around booziness to it. It displays a rich burnt amber color in the glass with aromas of sugar cane, sweet malt, rye bread, wood grain and a hint of fresh grape jelly. The body is a bit flat with medium weight and lower carbonation along with a strongly drying overall character. Dried candied figs and some vinous grape characteristics lead through to the finish. Different, for sure, but it doesn't quite mesh the way it would. WE

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THE ULTIMATE IN NEAT

IN PRAISE OF THE FLASK—STRAIGHT FROM THE HIP YET CLOSE TO THE HEART

BY SANDRA BEASLEY



The flask was a graduation gift, two years after my first taste of Scotch—a 30-year-old Macallan. Perhaps the spell this flask cast on me was due to the reverence of my friend's father as he revealed the label, or the sweet finish of the Sherry casking. Maybe it was the thrill of consuming something older than me. Whatever the cause, there was no going back to rum and Coke.

"You should cultivate a taste for Black Label," Christopher Hitchens would tell me, years later, when I queried the contents of his tumbler at a party. "Wherever you go," he advised, "you can always find Johnny Walker."

But flasks rise above such compromises. The design's curve reigns supreme over the squat of a beer bottle, or a wineglass's neurotic determination to distance your hand from its bounty. In contrast, a flask welcomes the body. Others may garnish Laphroaig's peat with the chill of an ice cube. I prefer an oaky Dalmore, the smooth flavor opening up from being flasked at my side, just as tulips open in a warm room. No water, no glass; a drink doesn't get more neat.

People seem surprised by my flask, as if flasks are exclusive to manly men. They've seen too many Westerns. (Cue Michele Lupo's *The Man from Nowhere*, in which a man carries an explosive disguised as a flask, while sipping from a flask disguised as a revolver.) In the 1700s, it was women who snuck pig bladders of gin, concealed in their petticoats, onto British warships. Or consider French tennis star Suzanne Lenglen, born in 1899. She's remembered not only for saucy midcalf uniforms and smashing forehands, but for swigging brandy from a courtside flask between sets. During Prohibition, a lady's garter belt always did double duty—lifting stockings and securing liquor, a revelation that led the scandalized state of Indiana to outlaw flasks entirely.

I confess to the smuggler's impulse. At the end of each trip, I can't bear to drain my leftover Scotch. I pack my flask for the plane, knowing a TSA agent will do the dirty deed for me. "You sure you don't want to step over there and drink this?" asked one. "This is a shame."

One day I found a conspirator. An airport guard took one sniff and raised his eyebrows.

"Dalwhinnie, sir," I said. "Highland single malt. Fifteen year."

He smiled. Lo and behold, my Scotch made it onto the long flight back to Washington. Thousands of feet in the air I toasted the guard, finished the contents of the flask, then screwed it shut. Unfortunately, I hadn't accounted for the change in air pressure upon landing. When I retrieved my flask from my purse, its pewter walls were crumpled inward. My noble companion, as if seeking the very last drop, had swallowed itself.

Everyone should have a first flask. (Not everyone will have to buy another.) My first flask wears the Virginia state seal—Virtus, Roman goddess of bravery, standing over her defeated opponent with spear in hand. The second bears my initials. Sometimes I eye them, side by side on the shelf, and wonder at this lineage I've claimed. Granted, I don't carry a spear. But if you ever send a bullet my way, I've got a pocketful of steel waiting for you. WE

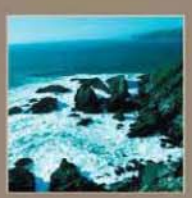
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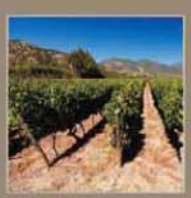
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